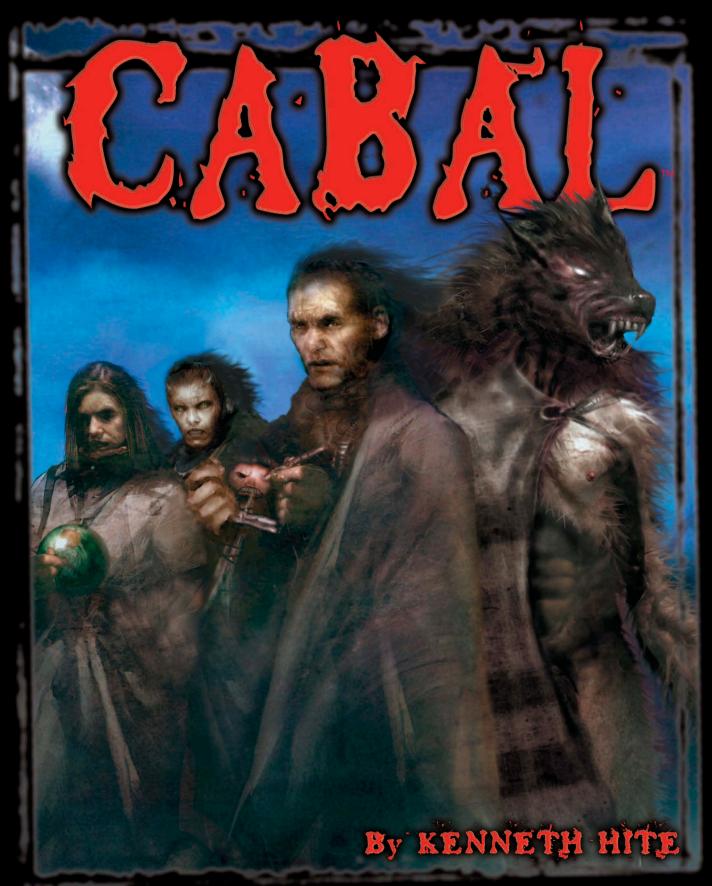
G U R P S



STEVE JACKSON GAMES

Enter The Four Realms... If You Dare!

What if the material world were but the tip of the iceberg – a single realm in a vast sea of infinities, each holding secrets deeper and more frightening than the one before? What if an alliance of supernatural beings – a Cabal of spirits, trolls, vampires, and wizards – ran it all, from the Post Office to the Godhead itself? What if the *real* history of the world were nothing but a twisted tale of conspiratorial weirdness, specifically engineered to hide these realities from you?

Ask no more, because it's all true. And you lived here all along and never had a clue. And you were probably better off that way, because the Cabal is the *good* news. They might control minds, suck blood, and use human empires as pawns in their games, but at least they look out for Creation. In a way, that makes them the good guys.

Don't ask about the bad guys . . .

GURPS Cabal can be used as a stand-alone setting or as a supplement for a *GURPS Horror* or *GURPS Illuminati* campaign. Highlights include:

Secret History – The *true* history of the world, from the First Creation to the present day.

Occult Cosmology – A detailed explanation of the Four Realms (the Material, the Astral, the Iconic, and the Spiritual), the planetary spheres, the zodiacal signs, the elemental planes, and the sephiroth.

The Cabal – The Secret Masters, their organization, their methods, and their rivals.

Magic – A detailed Hermetic magic system which adds astrological correspondences, Laws of Sympathy, and sacred architecture to the stock *GURPS* magic system, as well as complete rules for black magic, kabbalism, and Words of Power.

Wondrous Artifacts – Items of power, from the Great Orrery to the Hand of Glory.

Gods and Monsters – A bestiary of the supernatural, including djinn, elementals, Lemurians, reptoids, and the fearsome qlippoth.



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GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition, Revised and Compendium I are required to use this supplement in a GURPS campaign. GURPS Grimoire and Magic, Second Edition are recommended, but not vital. The occult conspiracy presented in GURPS Cabal can be used with any game system.

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THE PARTING OF THE VEIL

Brian McAllen crouched behind the adobe wall and watched the vampire below him.

The vampire seemed to be speaking urgently to two identical, completely hairless men. An extremely large wolf prowled around the perimeter of the sunken chamber, whining and sniffing the air. Even safely downwind, Brian hoped fervently that the extra gob of chaparral scent he'd slathered on was masking his sweat.

It wasn't just fear that had him tasting salt and wishing he could move his hand enough to wipe his forehead. It was the thrill of being right, of knowing more than the other guy, knowing more than everybody. He'd felt it, a little, hunting these same New Mexico hills as a teenager; he'd felt it again, a lot more strongly, hunting Iraqi snipers in the Gulf. Now, it nearly dizzied him.

It had been in the Gulf that he first felt the other thing that had brought him to this abandoned Navajo kiva – the sense of some inhuman presence, watching his actions while he took cover in that stone well outside Basra. Brian had eventually looked up the marks on those walls and discovered they were Sumerian cuneiform; he still hadn't been able to find the marks on the smooth soapstone pendant he had found there in any reference book.

Not even in the ones he'd been sent by fans after his novel had come out — **Deathspell in Dallas** had attracted a lot of weirdos. It had also paid for much of the specialized equipment Brian had emplaced ringing the kiva tonight, and it had put him in contact with a few people who seemed to know more than the average Kennedy cultist.

What they knew had eventually brought him here, to wait.

"Finally, you come!" The vampire's outburst – unconsciously, Brian hoped – echoed Brian's thoughts. The woman who stepped off the steep path into the chamber was unbelievably beautiful, moving with a sinuous grace that almost distracted Brian from the fact that she left a snake's trail behind her rather than footprints. She said, more petulant than angry, Brian thought, "I took the time to make sure I wasn't followed. Which is probably more than you did, Radetsky."

Brian knew a cue when he heard one. Without moving his left hand, he squeezed his fingers together on the detonator clip. The echoing bangs around the sides of the kiva distracted the five below long enough for him to pull the sand-covered tarp off the high-UV SunBeam searchlight by his side. Its light stabbed into the coven, flaring off the vampire and the lamia, and pinning the werewolf to the ground, to writhe helplessly in the throes of sudden change. Another press of the detonator clip and the mingled asafoetida and garlic gas grenades buried in the sand popped off, pouring aromatic smoke into the sunken room.

Brian felt the stone around his neck grow warm and slippery, and he fired a shot into a randomly chosen twin. The silver-and-mercury round didn't have the stopping power of a standard .45 bullet, but it didn't need to. The pendant cooled again, as one of the warlocks crumpled to the ground clutching his shattered knee.

The standing twin glared up at Brian, refusing even to blink against the blinding spotlight. "So, meddling fool. You think you have defeated us. You may even kill us all tonight – but the Cabal marked you for death before you pulled that trigger."

Brian's heart slowed back down to something near normal, and he took a deep breath.

"I think you have the wrong idea, Adept," he said. "I'm not here to kill you. I'm here to join you."

About GURPS

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of *GURPS*. Our address is SJ Games, Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) when you write us! Resources include:

Pyramid (www.sjgames.com/pyramid/). Our online magazine includes new GURPS rules and articles. It also covers Dungeons and Dragons, Traveller, World of Darkness, Call of Cthulhu, and many more top games – and other Steve Jackson Games releases like In Nomine, INWO, Car Wars, Toon, Ogre Miniatures, and more. Pyramid subscribers also have access to playtest files online!

New supplements and adventures. GURPS continues to grow, and we'll be happy to let you know what's new. A current catalog is available for an SASE. Or check out our website (below).

Errata. Everyone makes mistakes, including us – but we do our best to fix our errors. Up-to-date errata sheets for all *GURPS* releases, including this book, are available from SJ Games; be sure to include an SASE. Or download them from the Web – see below.

Gamer input. We value your comments, for new products as well as updated printings of existing titles!

Internet. Visit us on the World Wide Web at www.sjgames.com for an online catalog, errata, updates, Q&A, and much more. **GURPS** has its own Usenet group, too: rec.games.frp.gurps.

GURPSnet. This e-mail list hosts much of the online discussion of GURPS. To join, e-mail majordomo@io.com with "subscribe GURPSnet-L" in the body, or point your web browser to gurpsnet.sjgames.com.

The *GURPS Cabal* web page is at www.sjgames.com/gurps/books/cabal/.

Page References

Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the *GURPS Basic Set*, *Third Edition Revised*. Any page reference that begins with a B refers to *GURPS Basic Set* – e.g., p. B144 refers to page 144 of *Basic Set*. BO refers to *Black Ops*, CI to *Compendium I*, CII to *Compendium II*, G to *Grimoire*, M to *Magic, Second Edition*, P to *Psionics*, PM to *Places of Mystery*, R to *Religion*, T to *Technomancer*, TT to *Time Travel*, UN to *Undead*, VO to *Voodoo*, WWi and WWii to *Who's Who I* and 2, and WT to *Warehouse 23*. For a full list of abbreviations, see p. CI181 or the updated web list at www.sjgames.com/gurps/abbrevs.html.

The Cabal has lurked in the shadows of the Earth since the Pyramids were new. It has made and unmade empires, launched and ended wars, raised and destroyed cultures.

And that's not even the scary part.

The global conspiracy thing? That's just their day job. Their real job is hiding the truth about the world, hiding it from us. Magic, you see, is real, and human beings – the ones who learn its nature, the ones who master its secret physics – can hear, and even tune, the music of the spheres.

That's the scary part.

Not scared yet? Einstein and Heisenberg were only paddling around in a wading pool believing it was the ocean; the "laws of nature" we hear about in our comfortable brick schoolrooms are purely local laws, and they can be – and are – superseded by higher authority all the time.

The material world doesn't even exist; even the tiny atoms strung together across the vast gulf of emptiness that we call "matter" are no more real than holograms. They're fairly convincing holograms – but only if you never look outside.

Of course, once you've looked outside, once you've torn open the scrim of substance, once you've grasped that not just your family, or America, or the Earth, but the entire *universe*, from Big Bang to quasars, is just a moderately interesting hallucination – well, once you've done that, it's hard to really care about other people.

When you look behind the curtain of meat and mortgages and the laws of thermodynamics, you see others back there – others that *never* really cared about other people. Vampires, werewolves, trolls, specters, and things that not even legend has names for. In a word: monsters.

And you have a lot more in common with them, because whatever else they are, they know that the material world isn't the same thing as the real world. Just like you do.

So, like any group of people with common interests, you work together. You team up, offer a helping hand, make common cause between monster and magus. You form a brotherhood, a trade group - a Cabal of those who know the true ways to power, and seek to master and then use them.

Against us.

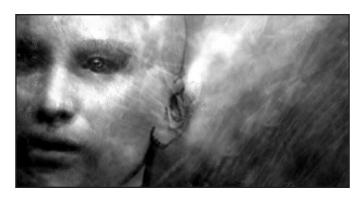
Against humanity.

Against the unenforceable laws of nature.

Scared yet?

Magical Realism (or, What I Made Up)

In the indispensable *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*, published in 1532, the brilliant Cornelius Agrippa managed to interweave the many various strands of medieval magic, from theurgy to sympathetic magic to the theory of "virtues and natures," with the classical arts of astrology and alchemy. Along with other Renaissance magi such as John Dee and Giordano Bruno, Agrippa created a magical "unified field theory" of surprising flexibility and explanatory power. Essentially all modern Western magical thought has descended from Agrippa, and even the loudly postmodern "chaos magicians" still define their magic in the intellectual framework he constructed. The late-Victorian Hermetic Order of the Golden



Dawn again synthesized Agrippan magic, this time with kabbalism and Tarot scholarship, into a cohesive, if dizzyingly complex and occasionally self-contradictory, whole. Aleister Crowley, who rebelled against the Order but continued its intellectual tradition, further romanticized and formalized it, drawing on post-Newtonian physics, poetic license, and Indian ritual traditions.

The Hermetic magic in this book, although essentially a simplification and streamlining (no, really, it is) of post-Crowley Golden Dawn magical thought, returns to Agrippa for its central magical thesis: that the decans, the 36 segments of the zodiac, actually govern and create all perceived existence. The combination of the decans' general obscurity (Crowley doesn't seem to have cared much for them), inchoate practice (while researching this book, I found no less than six completely contradictory decanic imageries), and large-yet-manageable number (enough for each *GURPS Magic* college to have one, with a spooky 13 more left over for extra weirdness) made them the perfect hook on which to hang the Cabal's pointy little wizard hat. With some poking and stretching for dramatic purposes, I did so.

Everything else in this book is absolutely true, except for this sentence. Fnord.

About the Author

Kenneth Hite has been in league with supernatural forces ever since a terrifying sequence of events during the fall of 1979. Although he covered his tracks as coauthor of GURPS Alternate Earths and Alternate Earths 2, the hidden archons behind human endeavor had elevated him to the shadowy line developership of the Nephilim: Occult Roleplaying game from Chaosium. He explored the Inner Realms as editor or contributor to Heaven and Hell, Fall of the Malakim, and The Final Trumpet for In Nomine, and vouchsafed certain dark truths in work for Vampire: the Masquerade and Mage: the Sorcerers Crusade, culminating with the bleak revelations of The Cainite Heresy. He helped plot the end of the world in GURPS Y2K and continues to Make Manifest That Which Should Be Hidden in his weekly column for Pyramid, committing the ultimate blasphemy of collecting these unholy ravings in two Suppressed Transmission volumes.

His wife, Sheila, knits.

Sample Campaign Frames

Black School Days

Oh, it's going to be ripping good fun at the Scholomance, learning about magic and demons and why our good Queen sheds her skin every January 6th. I say, do you think we'll get to meet Erasmus Rooke? He's ever so brainy. I think the fourth-form master is a lich; just our rum luck to be stuck with a vampire this term. They never sleep, and so it's always loads of homework to swot up, and keep us from practicing our human chess and our illusion-combat. If those blighters in Mordred House think they can take the school trophy away from us, though, they can just go whistle. Nobody can stop Prospero House - we're the top house for alchemy and for elementals, and everyone knows it. Why, I've heard that if we keep our end up, Master Ruthven is going to take us on a field trip to get hands-on experience with necromancy. To Whitechapel, even! Yes, it's going to be ripping good fun at the Black School this term!

Character Creation: Every character must be a junior Cabalist between the ages of 10 and 16. The basic setting is an unnamed Black School very closely modeled on a Victorian public school of the sort glorified in the works of Thomas Hughes or Rudyard Kipling.

Power Level: 25-75 points.

Genre: Conspiracy, with a strong flavor of horror-fantasy. Modes: Victorian and investigative, with strong possibilities for camp, silly (as a "dark" GURPS IOU game), or Gothic.



Background: Either historical (the Victorian era would be truest to the source material) or modern without trouble; multiplanar could work as well if the School's campus stretches across the Realms.

Notes: Rather than being modeled after Harry Potter and the classic British boy's school story, try reworking it as a Buffy: the Vampire Slayer manqué, with our young heroines discovering the black school within a school, or realizing that everyone at Martense College is a monster. Or cast it as a tiny band of young Cabalists forced to hang together as a "university Lodge" at an enormous mortal school and keep the secret while they learn the ropes.

Black as She's Painted

Right now, diseases fester in the upper Cameroon that can liquefy human entrails in hours. The hydrodynamics that hold back the glaciers from England, and the krill that keep coastal Asia's food supply alive on the other side of the world, weaken and die as the oceans heat and churn. Dark, enormous meteors streak through space to intersect Earth's orbit. Billions of people starve as slaves to syphilitic, nuclear-armed warlords on two continents as democracy putrefies in apathy, corruption, and decadence. Demons, and more alien Things, squabble over places at the coming feast. The only thing that can stop it all is a conspiracy of sorcerers, monsters, and the undead – unless they're the ones who planned it.

Character Creation: The PCs are special-ops troopers and spies – the last good men in a suicidal civilization, witch-hunters with stealth helicopters and silver bullets. Or they're an alliance of Cabalists like the Brotherhood of Phlebas, ones who fear the truth – but who fear ignorance more. Non-Cabalists should begin with robust survival and intelligence skills, to keep them alive until they learn enough of the truth to use countermagic.

Power Level: 150-250 points.

Genre: Horror, conspiracy.

Modes: Gritty, investigative, possibly splatter or technothriller.

Background: Modern, globetrotting, possibly urban. Notes: Conspiracy theory as modern noir. The protagonists stumble onto something that points to a reason for the world going to hell, something that throws them into conflict with a callous and inhuman Inner Circle. The Inner Realms should be kept grim, horrific, and very alien. Played with more emphasis on the dramatic, this could become a dark modern pulp game. At higher, perhaps cosmic levels, the heroes might even be black ops (see p. 82).

Continued on next page . . .

Magic Items

The GM should assign the Power (or spell skill-level equivalent, for items without formal enchantments) of these items to suit his story: some tana leaves might be old, dried up, and cut with oregano; others might be freshly harvested from the Canopic branch of the Nile and flown into O'Hare this morning. (That said, 25 is the likely minimum Power for any item intended for regular use on Assiah.) This differential will, of course, show up in the price – if the seller is honest, and knows his stock. None of the prices given correspond to the suggested magic-item value system given on p. M20. (To begin with, prices should be about 15 times greater, given the variance in starting wealth between the default GURPS Magic fantasy world and the modern era.) There is no transparent market in magic items or materials. Those who harvest, make, sell, and broker them have more in common with arms dealers or fences than with medieval craftsmen. The scribbled tags in dusty antique shops and the midnight auctions in secret places around the globe only dimly reflect pure supply and demand. Regional shortages, a gifted wizard desperate to raise some ready cash, the sudden death of a renowned collector, or transient sorcerous fashion can radically raise or lower these costs at the GM's whim. Thus, these values indicate only the most general and relative costs, intended to give the GM a starting idea of how much fencing some murdered adept's tools can raise toward phony passports and bribes at the border. Finding a magically savvy fence in the first place can be an adventure in itself.

Constructs

Clockworks

From the early 4th-century B.C. experiments of Archytas of Tarentum, who constructed mechanical birds, Cabalists have created clockwork creatures to serve as ser-

vants, spies, assassins, or entertainments. To design a magical clockwork, use Engineer

(Clockwork) skill. To power it, enchant it with Animate Object (p. G67) or Animate Machine (p. G98); build in a Bioconvertor, Mana Engine, or Soulburner (see pp. VE86-87), or a Lemurian crystal (see p. 110) granting the Power spell (p. M43); or construct the clockwork itself to focus ambient magical energy for programmed (and usually dedicated) operation.

This latter requires a successful Thaumatology roll to derive the proper ratios for the clockwork's gears and springs, and a successful

Alchemy roll to determine their required composition. As a *GURPS Vehicles* energy bank (p. VE88), magical clockwork built of common materials (brass, silver, etc.) weighs 0.025 lbs. per kWs, occupies 1 cf per 50 lbs., and costs \$55 per lb. Constructing a magical clockwork from orichalcum (see p. 107) reduces weight to 0.005 lbs. per kWs and raises cost to \$5,500 per lb.

Golems

Many Cabalists find uses for golems (see pp. M116-117), homunculi (see p. G42), and other magically constructed humanoids such as the *gargoiles vrais* (see p. 116) of Hugues de Stenay. Thanks to the vagaries of magical accident, untimely possession, and so on, some of them have even become sentient, independent members of the Cabal. In the last fifty years or so, Aeon Laboratories (see p. 377) and other magical research institutions have created modified golems such as the titanium and plastic varieties from p. T49. The most advanced labs currently work to build immortal, powerful golem bodies from scratch to house the souls of Cabal Masters; experimental golems from these vats may have any of the modifications or powers from *GURPS Bio-Tech*.

Orreries

An orrery is an astrological model of the universe, usually depicting the planets rotating around the Sun (or, for older models, the Earth). Some orreries also indicate comets, astral storms, the precession of the equinoxes, and so forth. The Great Orrery, in the Black School at Edinburgh, has every known astrologically significant body represented by semi-precious stones and is controlled by an orichalcum clockwork designed by Tycho Brahe and Percival Lowell in necromantic collaboration. Depending on its sophistication and reliability, an orrery will grant between +1 and +5 to any Astrology roll made using it, and half that bonus to any spell calibrated with it. To orrery-calibrate a spell, the caster must utilize an astrological modifier of at least +1 and ceremonially cast the spell (see p. B151) while studying the orrery.

Materia Magica

Although magic is all about the truth behind the substance, sometimes the substance is the truth. These formulations of base matter can and do often serve the mystical ends of the Cabal.

Azoth

This alchemical substance, also known as the Green Lion or the Philosopher's Mercury, amplifies and activates the quintessence of any matter. Azothically activated diamond becomes hard enough to contain the alkahest, or universal solvent, without dissolving. In conjunction with azoth, the inherent gold within a base metal can be drawn into focus in the Material Realm, or the inherent elemental air within wood sap can be harnessed to lift a wooden ship.

Azoth is distilled from mercury at about a 1:50 ratio. This requires the formula (jealously guarded by the various alchemical families) and the Alchemy skill, as well as laboratory facilities (at least a \$250,000 investment) and a lot of mercury. (Make sure those labs are well-ventilated; mercury poisoning causes serious brain damage.) If you use the Invention rules on p. CI121-127, then treat the distilling of azoth as a Complex invention (-14 to invention roll) – or as an Amazing invention (-22), if the alchemist must first derive the formula. Repeated attempts are allowed, although the mercury used in an unsuccessful attempt is completely spoiled.

Demons

240 points

Demons, spirits who refuse to accept the rule of the Archangels and who seek to disrupt the cosmic order, dwell within the Abyss, living on each other, the spills of energy over the rim of the Abyss, and the occasional foolhardy Cabalist. Fissures from the Abyss extend beneath all the Realms, even into Assiah. Fortunately, demons and many other Abyssal beings can only climb "uphill" into the Realms with considerable assistance from outside - foolish mortals summoning demons (see Demonic Contracts, p. 123) can seldom open a full-fledged doorway between the Abyss and Earth. Demons in the Realms can be constrained with Pentagrams and other spells, remain bound by their word, and operate under many other restrictions that they do not face in the Abyss. Although the Cabal officially frowns on summoning demons, their power, versatility, ease of control, and reputation makes them favored servants to more callous or arrogant Cabalists.

Advantages: Extra Fatigue +5 [15]; Invulnerability (Spells resisted by IQ)* [75]; Night Vision [10]; Spirit Form (Physical Form, +80%; Unlimited Lifespan, +30%) [210].

Disadvantages: Excommunicated [-10]; Social Stigma (Outlaw) [-15]; Vow (Must keep to the letter of a promise) [-15]; Vulnerability (1d from holy materials or silver) [-5]; and (at least) -25 points in "evil" mental disadvantages such as Bloodlust, Lecherousness, and Sadism.

Quirks, Features, and Taboo Traits: Affected by Astral Block, Banish, Pentagram, Repel Spirits, and Turn Spirit [0]; Can be detected by sensitive individuals and animals [0]; Can be turned using True Faith [0].

* Demons resist these spells automatically.

Some demons have the ability to work magic. To create such a demon, add Magery and one or more spell colleges at skill level 15+.

Dweller Upon the Threshold

The Dweller Upon the Threshold is the demon that a traveler must defeat in order to enter Atziluth. Each traveler's demon is different, although they all begin with the demon template. The Dweller possesses all of the powers, spells, and skills of the traveler; if the traveler uses a powerful magic item, the Dweller can summon demons from the Abyss to take it away by force (and further weaken the would-be Grand Master) before combat starts. To encounter the Godhead, one must vanquish one's own worst self – and that is the Dweller Upon the Threshold. The GM should individually craft the Dweller to reflect the worst aspects of the seeker's personality, history, and nature.

Qlippoth

The word *qlippoth* means "shells" in Hebrew; qlippoth are the crusts, the scabs, the shed skin flakes, the chitinous carapaces of actual creation, of actual life. Heterodox kabbalistic theory (and best-guess Cabalistic speculation) holds that before the Creation, God made a "first draft" of the world, which He then remade after destroying it. (Evidence for such

belief can be found in the two conflicting creations of mankind in Genesis 1:26-27 and Genesis 2:7.) The fragments, or shells, of this shattered Creation sifted down from the Realms and formed the Vale of Hinnom, "God's garbage pit." The Abyss may be the radiated effect of the qlippothic energies on the rest of the Realms, a scab on the bottom surface of existence. (It is possible that the "echo effect" from this first, aborted Creation wrecked Lemuria and Atlantis, and causes the "reality quakes" mentioned on p. 112.)

Now, the fragments of this diseased, broken, toxic energy seek to regain their place in Creation, remaking it in their own stunted image. Qlippothic fragments must be physically transported to Assiah; they cannot leave the area of the Abyss on their own, nor can they be summoned, as they can no longer be described by language. (Cabalists whisper, however, that it was the realization that the calculus would allow approximations of qlippothic values that finally killed Newton.) However, if a breeding population of qlippoth is established on Earth, they can only be rooted out by fiery cauterization of the area. Qlippoth spawn when impregnated by energies of despair, nightmare, brutality, and incest, brought to quickening by any of the earthly equivalents of their own deliquescent truth. They eat human flesh by preference, but will dine on anything putrid.

To begin with, a swarm of qlippoth has only fragments of personality, usually the verbal patterns, nervous habits, desires, or obsessions of the humans they have consumed, sometimes flavored by the psychic energies of their spawning. When the swarm grows larger (usually about the mass of 12 people), qlippoth develop a gestalt mind, a vile and diseased aggregate of their consumption. Skills, advantages, and so forth emerge as the gestalt grows larger. If the gestalt has consumed a mage or psi, the swarm may even develop spells or psionic abilities.

A qlippothic swarm breaks down if its membership spreads over three miles from its center, forming sub-swarms at new focal points. A large enough swarm (120 human masses) can begin to taint decanic energies, using its assembled energy to power debased spells from existing magical flows (such as ley lines or places of power) or from artifacts such as Powerstones. Each swarm of qlippoth has a favored form, usually similar to an earthly creature of ill nature or ill reputation. Many qlippothic entities have some measure of control over their earthly analogue creatures. The pig-qlippoth, the Molobrians (see p. 116), have already crossed over and gained a permanent foothold in Assiah; isolated colonies of other qlippoth may exist in the cracks and interstices of reality. The Adze (see p. BT83) may be a qlippothic entity of a divergent nature, possibly the result of a qlippothic attack on the Sirri.

Qlippoth Racial Package -110 points

This template applies to all known qlippothic beings. Specific breeds of qlippoth diverge from this as indicated in the individual descriptions below.

Advantages: Cast Iron Stomach [15]; Decreased Life Support [10]; Immunity to Disease [10]; Immunity to Poison [15].
Disadvantages: Dead Broke [-25]; Dependency (Human misery; common, daily) [-15]; Dependency (Mana; infrequent, daily) [-60]; Horrific Appearance [-30]; Odious Racial Habit (Eats humans) [-15]; Sadism [-15].

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