

G U R P S[®]



HEXES[™]



BY MICHAEL SUILEABHAIN-WILSON

STEVE JACKSON GAMES

PICK A CARD, ANY CARD...

In the Weird West, a deck of cards can be a lethal weapon. For hucksters, poker isn't just a game – it's a path to supernatural power.

The huckster tries to master a *manitou*, an evil spirit from Indian mythology – but the consequences of failure can be deadly. For everyone.

Hexes is a collection of spells for your *Deadlands* game. Some of these have previously appeared in Pinnacle's *Deadlands* books, but some are brand new, with stats for both the original *Deadlands* and *GURPS Deadlands*. There are also new huckster templates and a full discussion of just what it means to *be* a hexslinger.



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GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition, Revised and Compendium I are required to use this supplement in a *GURPS* campaign. *GURPS Deadlands: Hexes* can be used with any roleplaying system.

THE HUCKSTERS:

Written by

MICHAEL SUILEABHAIN-WILSON

Edited by

ANDREW HACKARD

Cover by

ALEX FERNANDEZ

Illustrated by

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GURPS System Design ♠ STEVE JACKSON

GURPS Line Editor ♦ SEAN PUNCH

GURPS Project Manager ♥ STEVEN MARSH

Page Design ♣ HEATHER OLIVER

Production Artists ♠ ALEX FERNANDEZ and GENE SEABOLT

Art Direction ♦ PHILIP REED

GURPS FAQ Maintainer ♥ VICKY "MOLOKH" KOLENKO

Chief Executive Officer ♣ PHILIP REED

Chief Creative Officer ♠ SAM MITSCHKE

Chief Operating Officer ♦ SUSAN BUENO

Director of Sales ♥ ROSS JEPSON

Indexer ♣ JEFF WILSON

Lead Playtester ♠ JEFF WILSON

Playtesters: JT Benton, Frederick Brackin, Tyler Childers, Joe Deckert, Perry King, Jeff Raglin, L. Myke Sargent, Ralf Tschulena

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PAGE REFERENCES

Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the *GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition*. Any page reference that begins with a B refers to the *GURPS Basic Set* – e.g., p. B102 means p. 102 of the *GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition*. Page references that begin with CI indicate *GURPS Compendium I*. Other references are CII for *Compendium II* and DL for *Deadlands: Weird West*. The abbreviation for *this* book is D:H. For a full list of abbreviations, see p. CI181 or the updated web list gurps.sjgames.com/abbrevs.html.

INTRODUCTION

Magic is not for the timid. A person who wants to wield the powers of the supernatural and shape the world to his liking has to be willing to put body, mind, and soul on the line. To cast a hex – to change the world – means facing down the meanest creatures to be found in this or any other plane of existence, matching will against will and wit against wit, and walking away smiling.

This book contains information about hucksters – the spellcasters of the Weird West – expanded beyond the material provided in *GURPS Deadlands: Weird West*. It has dozens of new hexes, new advantages and disadvantages, new template lenses, campaign and adventure suggestions, and extensive new background material for your *Deadlands* campaign. GMs will need the *GURPS Basic Set*, *GURPS Compendium I*, and *GURPS Deadlands: Weird West*.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Michael Suileabhain-Wilson has been writing gaming material for about three years, but his role-playing roots predate the second Reagan administration. His previous work includes an assortment of articles in *Pyramid* and elsewhere, as well as the *GURPS Deadlands* Conversion Notes. Aside from gaming, his interests run the gamut of ways to interact with food, books, and people. Professionally, he dances a deadly minuet with carpal tunnel syndrome, testing video games by day and writing freelance by night. He lives south of San Francisco with his fiancée, many hypothetical cats, and a fabulous sofa.

TUNING MAGICAL APTITUDE

It is easier in *GURPS Deadlands* to get a large hand than it is in the original *Deadlands*. *GURPS Deadlands* gives extra cards for high levels of Magical Aptitude (Huckster) and for good hex rolls; original *Deadlands* only gives extra cards for good hex rolls. This makes the typical *GURPS Deadlands* hand larger, which greatly increases the chances of getting a good hand, and therefore a more powerful hex effect. As a result, *GURPS Deadlands* hucksters are, on the whole, more powerful, if slightly more backlash-prone.

Groups who want to retain more of the feel of original *Deadlands* can scale back hucksters' power by not giving extra cards for higher levels of Magical Aptitude (Huckster). Magical Aptitude (Huckster) remains valuable; it gives bonuses to hex level, and the range and duration of many hexes are based on it.

level of Jacks and avoiding the risk of backlash from further cards.

TEMPEST

25 POINTS

A tempest is a person born with an uncontrolled magic talent. Most tempests die in a magical accident before adolescence, but a few manage to reach adulthood alive and kicking.

Tempest characters pick any single hex as their inborn talent. The tempest can use this hex at any time, but voluntarily invoking wild magic takes its toll. Willingly activating the power of the tempest causes the tempest character to lose one character point. This point can come out of the tempest's unspent character points, or out of skills and advantages.

When a tempest invokes his power, he draws four cards from a complete deck and attempts to assemble the best hand possible, just as if he were a huckster. Because he draws fewer cards, the higher hands will be extremely difficult if not impossible; tempests should therefore avoid hexes that require hands of Two Pairs or better. Tempests do not suffer backlash. However, if the tempest draws a joker, his talent goes completely out of control. In this case, the GM decides what happens.

The tempest's talent can also go wild on its own. Whenever the tempest is mentally stunned – usually as a result of surprise or Fright Checks – his talent activates. Fortunately, although the tempest cannot prevent the hex from going off, he can still choose the hex's target, and loses no character points.

MAGIC RESISTANCE

SEE P. B21

In a default *Deadlands* campaign, Magic Resistance is not available; magic is a force that has its way with all mortals, whether they like it or not. However, some GMs may wish to allow it in their game; Magic Resistance can give the PCs an edge against an uncaring world.

NATURAL SPELLCASTING

SEE P. C141

Some hucksters have a natural intuition for the ways of the manitou. Such a huckster can sometimes, in dire circumstances, cajole manitous into doing something he never learned how to force from them. Most hexes that aren't in *Hoyle's Book of Games* came into circulation this way.

NEW ADVANTAGES

OLD HAND

15 POINTS

Characters with Magical Aptitude (Huckster) may take this advantage. It allows a huckster casting a hex to draw his cards one card at a time, stopping whenever he chooses. Therefore, if a huckster with Magical Aptitude 1 draws a King, and then another King, he may stop without drawing the last three cards – settling for a hand

DISADVANTAGES

COMPULSIVE GAMBLING

SEE P. C188

Every huckster has a risk-taking streak. For some, however, gambling is a real problem. They need more frequent fixes, and wind up betting on everything. The most reckless hucksters even wind up using hexes when they don't need to, just for the pleasure of pitting themselves against the manitous. It's a fatal habit.

REPUTATION

SEE P. B17

In most parts, hucksters and tempests have a -4 Reputation when they're recognized. The average townsfolk don't hold with people playing with dark powers, and even if they're not inclined to have a lynching, people who ask for trouble by meddling with magic tend to get a cold shoulder.

GHOST TRAIL

REGULAR

Erases any trail left by the caster and two other people per level of Magical Aptitude. All affected people must remain in a group to benefit from the hex. Any person attempting to track the subjects suffers a -5 penalty to Tracking. Each hand level drawn above the base hand gives an additional -2 penalty. If a huckster using Ghost Trail is the subject of the hex Bloodhound (p. 25), Bloodhound is resisted by Ghost Trail. A horse counts as a person for the purpose of hex coverage; for a horse's trail to be erased, the horse and all riders must be covered by the hex.

Time to Cast: 1 second

Duration: 2 hours per level of Magical Aptitude

Range: Touch

Hand: Ace



LONG-WINDED

REGULAR

Enables the caster to communicate mental messages over long distances. He selects a subject at the time of casting; if the hand drawn is inadequate to reach the chosen subject, the hex is still cast, but the message is not received. The caster will not know if the message was safely received unless two-way communication is achieved.

Time to Cast: 2 seconds

Duration: 10 seconds per level of Magical Aptitude

Range: 2 miles per level of Magical Aptitude

Hand	Level of Detail
Ace	Simple emotion
Pair	One sentence
Two Pairs	Detailed message
Three of a Kind	Two-way communication

TIMESLIP

REGULAR

Allows the caster to step out of time for a brief period of time, disappearing until the hex expires. Nothing can affect him during the hex, nor can he take any action. Effectively, he does not exist during the timeslip. He may select any duration up to the maximum determined by the hand drawn. If some other object occupies the space vacated by

the caster when the hex ends, he appears as close to his original location as possible.

Time to Cast: 1

Duration: Special

Range: Self

Hand	Maximum Timeslip
Jacks	5 seconds
Two Pairs	10 seconds
Three of a Kind	25 seconds
Straight	1 minute
Flush	10 minutes
Four of a Kind	1 day
Straight Flush	1 week
Royal Flush	1 year

DARK HEXES

There are hexes manitous just love to be summoned for. These hexes actively advance the agenda of the Reckoning – helping people become Harrowed, raising the Fear Level in an area, and so on. Most hucksters think twice about getting involved with these sort of hexes, if for no other reason than the extremely deadly attention they are likely to draw from Rangers, Agency operatives, and other anti-Reckoning sorts of folks. These are the hexes which lend ammunition to the people who say that hexslinging is all a Reckoner plot to begin with.

HELL'S BARGAIN

REGULAR

This hex allows the caster to improve the odds of the subject coming back as a Harrowed. It must be cast on the body within five seconds of death. The subject then makes additional reaction rolls for coming back Harrowed, depending on the hand of the hex. If he does come back Harrowed, the manitou inhabiting his body gets a bonus to its Will equal to the number of extra rolls. If the caster suffers backlash, the manitou will animate the subject's body as a walkin' dead (p. DL115).

Time to Cast: 1 second

Duration: Instant

Range: 10 yards/level of Magical Aptitude

Hand	Extra Rolls
Ace	1
Pair	2
Two Pairs	3
Three of a Kind	4
Straight	6
Flush	8
Full House	10
Four of a Kind	13
Straight Flush	16
Royal Flush	19



ENVISION

REGULAR

This trick allows the caster to see through very thin objects. Coincidentally, the maximum thickness the caster can penetrate is about the thickness of a playing card, or an outer pocket on a garment. Envision is invaluable when cheating at cards; a huckster gains a +5 to his Gambling skill for any single hand in which he uses Envision.

Duration: 5 seconds

Range: 1 yard per level of Magical Aptitude

FALSE FACE

REGULAR

Alters minor facial features, adding a +2 bonus to Disguise rolls attempted on the caster.

Duration: 5 minutes

Range: Self

FINISH

REGULAR

Cleans up a single inanimate object, making it shiny and new-looking – polishing wood, shining metal, and so on. It doesn't fix anything that may be wrong with an object; a broken object which has Finish cast on it becomes a *pretty* broken object. Anyone trying to sell an item that has

had Finish cast on it gets a +2 to his Merchant roll for negotiating the price. This trick will only work on an object smaller than a medium-sized piece of furniture – a chest of drawers or thereabouts. This trick will work on gizmos.

FLARE

REGULAR

Causes a smallish fire – no more than 1 hex in diameter – to flare up, increasing its size by half. The fire gives off no more heat and consumes no more fuel, but it gives off more light and takes up more space.

Duration: 1 minute. Maintaining this trick costs 1 fatigue per extra minute.

Range: 1 yard per level of Magical Aptitude

Flicker

REGULAR

Causes all artificial light within the trick's range to waver for the duration of the trick, like a candle flame in a breeze. This dimming is minor but noticeable; all Vision rolls within the affected area are at -1 for the duration of the trick. Flicker cannot affect magical lighting or daylight.

Duration: 1 minute

Range: 1 yard per level of Magical Aptitude

TEXAS RANGERS

The Rangers take the same attitude toward hucksters as they do toward everything else supernatural: shoot it or recruit it. Although most hucksters don't have the same evil intentions that your average abomination does, they can easily cause just as much harm. People are scared of magic; whether it's an abomination out to eat faces or a huckster who hasn't learned to keep his hexes quiet yet, the terror is the same, and the aid to the Reckoning is the same as well.

As a result, when a Ranger susses out a huckster, they're going to have a little conversation. Careless or stupid hucksters generally receive an invitation to clear out of Confederate territory. Particularly dangerous loose cannons may be dealt with more permanently.

If, however, the huckster seems responsible and competent, he may find himself in an entirely different kettle of hot water. Once the Rangers know he has special talents, he will likely be called upon from time to time to render assistance, and the wise huckster does not tell the Texas Rangers no. These requests for aid can often involve much more danger than a sensible person likes to get into. Consequently, even the most high-minded huckster keeps his head down when a Ranger is in town.

A few Rangers are themselves hucksters. These Rangers go to extreme lengths to keep their talents hidden from everyone but their comrades. The people of the Confederacy rely upon the Rangers as a bulwark against the supernatural, and it wouldn't do to have them seeing a Ranger dabble in the mystic arts. Ranger hucksters therefore tend to avoid flashy hexes like Black Lightnin' in favor of more unobtrusive hexes like Missed Me!, Kentucky Windage, or the Ranger's favorite, Tall Tales.

THE AGENCY

Agency operatives have a different procedure from the Rangers for dealing with hucksters, but the basic principle is similar. Rather than confronting a suspected huckster directly, an Agency operative will shadow the suspect for a time and compile a report to send back to Headquarters. There, the Agency's analysts will use all available reports to assess the huckster in question as a resource or a threat. Occasionally, an operative in the field will feel a huckster to be an immediate threat to the Union and will eliminate him on the spot; the Agency discourages this approach in any but the most extreme cases.

A huckster labeled a "resource" will find himself invited to assist the Agency occasionally; this has the same ups and downs as being known to the Rangers, except that the Agency lacks the Rangers' sense of manners. This has driven more than one huckster to head further West or find himself a new name. "Threats," on the other hand, are kept under surveillance by the agency; if they move from being simply unreliable to being outright dangerous, they may become the target of an Agency operation themselves.

Officially, the Agency considers hucksters too unstable to use other than as temporary assistants. This is a complete fabrication. The agency uses many hucksters; they just don't recruit them. Instead, Agency hucksters are trained at a secret facility in Massachusetts called the Library. The Library is where all agents go for their basic training in the occult, so that the many supernatural occurrences they will face don't take them completely by surprise.

Some agents, however, stay for an extended course of study, training them in the art of hexslinging. Agency huckster training is extremely grueling; many candidates don't complete the course.

THE RANGER BIBLE

Rangers usually operate alone, far from support. To properly do their job, they need information on the powers and creatures they are called upon to fight. Toward this end, the Rangers print a book called the *Ranger Bible*. The *Ranger Bible* contains a listing of all identified supernatural threats: rogue hucksters, suspected tempests, known abominations, black magic wielders, and even a few outlaw Ranger recruits. Each new update adds any new threats identified and removes threats which have been

"dealt with." High-ranking Rangers carry their own copy; lower-ranking Rangers know where a copy is to be found near their assigned post. Every Ranger is required to collect information for the next update in the course of their work, and to take all measures necessary to prevent a copy of the *Ranger Bible* from leaving Ranger hands. When the book is updated, all old copies are burned. Only a few copies have ever circulated; if the Rangers learn of a loose copy, they come down on its holder like a ton of bricks.

Add to this the dozens of clandestine hucksters in attendance, the Rangers and Agency operatives on hand to watch them, and the assorted baggage they all bring with them, and the possibilities for trouble are limitless.

PLEDGE WEEK

Almost every huckster who's heard of the Royal Court wants badly to be part of it. Someday the party may meet a mysterious hexslinger who says he's heard of them, as has the Court. The Court might be interested in taking them on, if they're willing to do a little chore for them, just to demonstrate that they're really interested. Hazing doesn't even begin to describe it.

THE SIEGE OF INFINITY PRESS

The Gorgon has finally decided that Percy Sitgreaves has to be eliminated, and the party just happens to be visiting the press that day. Suddenly, they're trapped inside a building with the father of Thaumaturgical Diffusion, with a

Gorgon outside and nowhere to run. Should be an interesting afternoon.

THE SUICIDE QUEEN

The party is approached by a Queen-ranked member of the Royal Court. He's decided that he no longer wants anything to do with the Court and their plans (an amoral, power-hungry secret society was one thing, but actively serving the Reckoners is another). He needs their help to get far enough from the Court's power base to hide. He knows people who can help him in Denver and points west – possibly Jacques Portefour (see p. 11). He just needs someone to help him get away from the Mississippi.

However, the Court does not take defection lightly, and soon the party is facing a riled Ace. Whether the adventure is a long chase or a knock-down, drag-out fight, it will be an encounter to remember. This adventure can also lead into an ongoing series of adventures dealing with the Royal Court.

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