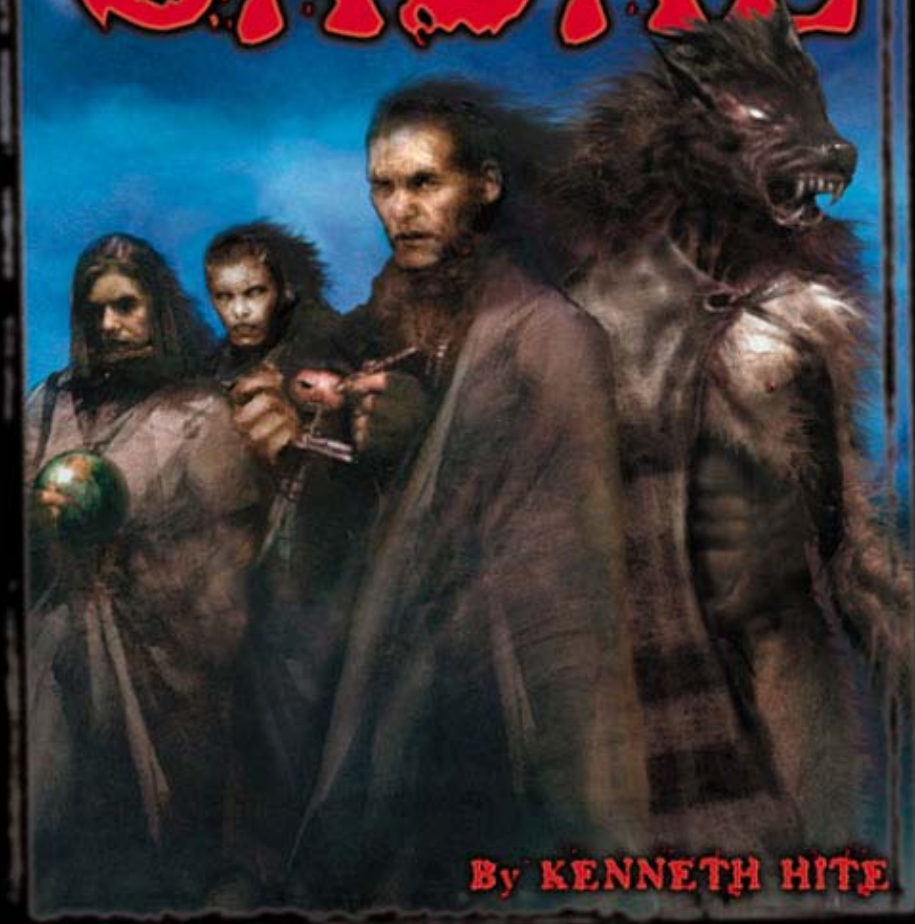


G U R P S

CABAL



By KENNETH HITE

STEVE JACKSON GAMES

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1 Introduction

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"laws of nature" we hear about in our comfortable brick schoolrooms are purely local laws, and they can be — and are — superseded by higher authority all the time.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 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.

1 Introduction

Scared yet?

1.0.1 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 co-author of *GURPS Alternate Earths* and *GURPS Alternate Earths 2*, the hidden archons behind human endeavor had elevated him to the shadowy line development 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.

1.1 Shadows in the Earth

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

The vampire seemed to be speaking urgently to a pair of twin, 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.

Which 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."

The Cabal is a loosely-knit secret society of mages, psychics, magically-affected humans such as vampires and lycanthropes, and completely inhuman monsters. Its origins lie in the mists of ancient Egypt, from a failed sorcerous rebellion against dead gods. Its true motives are closely guarded and known only to a few. On the surface, it appears to be a mutual protection society, devoted to maintaining the safety and anonymity of its members. However, Cabalists have infiltrated — have created — many powerful political and economic institutions, implying that the Cabal may have more grandiose, even nefarious intentions.

1.1.1 Goals and Methods

Members of the Cabal claim that their society is as ancient as civilization, offering sanctuary and understanding to people who have been touched by the supernatural. Members of the Cabal are sworn to secrecy, however, which makes it difficult for an outsider to learn of the group's true nature.

1.1.1.1 Fraternity

The immediate goals of the Cabal are threefold. First and foremost, the Cabal is a brotherhood of similar individuals. A member of the order will generally be a practicing sorcerer, exhibit psionic abilities, or be the product of powerful magic (vampires, lycanthropes, etc.). The Cabal provides mutual protection and secrecy for such individuals. Threats against members by mundane forces bring swift retaliation (usually through magical means). The Cabal has survived centuries of witch hunts and religious persecution. A major part of the initiate's oath of allegiance is his willingness to protect his fellow members.

The working Cabalist exposes himself to other perils besides those posed by ignorant mortals. From malign gods to sadistic astral slavers to tempting demons to angry djinn, the realm of sorcery holds many threats. Even the act of magic, of exploring the true nature of the world, can be beset with storms and mischance. Creation itself has its enemies, the

1 Introduction

qliphoth: maggots from the corpse of history, blowflies laying eggs in the eyes of reality. The Cabal aids its members against these esoteric threats as well.

1.1.1.2 Illumination

The second goal of the Cabal is the understanding of supernatural powers. This includes magic, psionics, spiritualism, occultism, and even Things Man Was Not Meant To Know. The Cabal has many resources at its disposal to aid in the research and understanding of such phenomena. Many of its members are occult scholars who also possess magical or psionic talents. The Cabal regularly dispatches members to investigate reports of supernatural occurrences, often in an attempt to suppress the public's knowledge of such events — agents perhaps too similar for comfort to the mysterious "Men in Black," who make life difficult for UFO abductees and humans exposed to the tiniest corners of the strange.

It should be noted that the Cabal is *not* interested in making supernatural phenomena "acceptable" to society at large. It has tried that once or twice, and nearly destroyed a continent in the process. Worse yet, it nearly crippled itself. The order thus prefers to keep the public misled about such matters, even going so far as to stage elaborate supernatural hoaxes and red herrings, knowing that eventually these will be revealed as frauds. The cattle mutilations of the 1970s may have been such a hoax, as might the "spoon-bending" talk-show antics of various psychic celebrities. The Cabal even provides grants to institutions and individuals devoted to *debunking* psychic powers and the occult. The reason for all of this is clear, in conspiratorial terms — the Cabal wishes to monopolize the supernatural for its own ends. What good is power, if you have to share it?

1.1.1.3 Continuity

Preserving magical power, especially among its own members, is the third immediate goal of the Cabal. The society's most powerful sorcerers create, maintain, and update spell books, tomes of necromancy and demonology, and other grimoires of eldritch lore. Masters pass ancient secrets to their initiates, who in turn transmit them to their own recruits. The Cabal creates magical items in niter-rimed crypts and in computerized laboratories, storing them in secret chambers and unused museum basements. Much of the Cabal's magic could be considered malign (demon summoning, invocations of Things, etc.), reinforcing the need for secrecy and mutual protection among its mages.

1.1.2 Inner Secrets of The Cabal

Secret societies maintain their secrecy because they have access to knowledge and power that would be misunderstood or misused if known to everyone. The Cabal is no exception. It considers itself the most powerful and long-lived of all magical societies, having infiltrated, affected, and even created medieval magic orders and modern groups such as The Golden Dawn, the Freemasons and the Rosicrucians. The Cabal's true work is perfecting magic and psionics to a point where humanity — or at least, human Cabalists — can achieve total immortality.

The key to the Cabal's power is its understanding of Hermetic magic, the true and accurate metaphysics that runs the world. Or worlds, rather; our Material Realm is only the skin of the apple — inside, in the Inner Realms, are spirits and ghosts, gods and monsters, dead legends and living curses. Thanks to its near-monopoly on Hermetism, the Cabal enjoys pre-eminence in the secret world of magic and can reach for the overlordship of the globe.

Many members of the Cabal have involved themselves with powerful organizations, such as governments and

corporations. The political motives of the Cabal are not the common ones — it already possesses power enough through magic and psionics. Infiltrating governments grants security, suborning corporations gives flexibility and provides the mundane resources that allow Cabalists to accumulate real power. The Cabal also manipulates, infiltrates, and subverts mortal organizations to battle other secret societies. The Cabal sees itself as the supreme magical order, and will not tolerate rival societies distorting the "true way" by using magic and psionics.

1.1.3 What's In A Name?

The word "cabal" means a conspiracy, or a private intrigue. It entered English in the early 1600s, from the French *cabale*, itself derived from the late-medieval Latin *cabala*, meaning a secret tradition, usually specifically referring to the Jewish mystical tradition normally transliterated *kabbalah*. (Other transliterations include *qabala*, *kaballah*, *qabbalah*, *kabala*, *cabbala*, *gabbala*, and so forth.) This word simply means "tradition" in Talmudic Hebrew, and originally referred to all of the Torah except the Pentateuch. It stems from the root *qbl*, "to receive," since the Torah was received from God. However, beginning in the early 13th century, the mystical Jewish schools of the Languedoc and northern Spain used "kabbalah" to mean a specific system of thought devoted to determining the underlying, hidden form and workings of the divine creation. It is this meaning that entered Latin, then French, and then English, with its overtones of secret knowledge (and with Christian anti-Semitic paranoia) informing the sense of the word. Through its Hermetic scholarship, the Cabal has adopted many kabbalistic terms and profited from many kabbalistic discoveries and theories. The kabbalists and their later intellectual heirs were and are not necessarily members of the Cabal, but the Cabal has profited from the confusion and often used Jewish mystics as scapegoats for its own unsavory doings. The Cabal, of course, claims that the Hebrew word *kabbalah* itself derives from the Cabal, the true "receivers" of the "tradition" of ancient wisdom. They take their name from the ancient Egyptian word *khaf* meaning "to bow before" — the Cabal was the original group of those who bowed before Khaibitu-na-Khonsu. Be that as it may, the Cabal has gone under many names since the beginning.

In *GURPS Cabal*, the term "Cabalist" refers to members or doctrines of the Cabal; "kabbalist" refers to practitioners of Jewish mysticism. The default assumption in *GURPS Cabal* is that successful, magically capable, kabbalists (like any other successful magic-users) are actually using Hermetic magic with variant terminology and abstruse justifications to paper over the divergences between "orthodox" kabbalah and the Hermetic truth. (For fitting kabbalistic magic per se into a *GURPS Cabal* campaign alongside Hermetic magic, see sidebar, p. 00.)

1.1.4 Magical Realism, or, What I Made Up

In the indispensable *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*, published in 1532, the brilliant Cornelius Agrippa managed to weave 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.

1 Introduction

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 thirteen 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.

2 Chapter One: Realms and Spheres

The banks of Alph, the Sacred River, thirstily drank Brian's ectoplasm as a yithoghu shadowblade purred through his arm.

Just because they're not material, he thought for the hundredth time that night, doesn't mean they can't kill me. After all, my ka isn't material either, and I've killed two of them. I hope.

He instinctively flew upstream toward an ash clearing, for the moment reopening the distance from his pursuers. He even risked a quick look back at the impressionistic blur behind him, but it all too soon resolved into dull red glints off too many yithoghu weapons and the sickly pearlescent sheen of their hideous octopoid skulls.

The leader pulled back his flipper, and inhumanly (impossibly) strong tendrils launched the crimson dart toward the fleeing Cabalist. This time, the blade went wide, whickering its way in an oblate arc back to the thrower's waiting cilia.

Although no canting theurge, Brian sent up a quick prayer of thanks to Hermes that he had entered the Realm magically rather than leaving a telltale silver cord behind in an astral projection. The yithoghu wouldn't have missed with something like that to point out the target for him.

As for who had pointed these astral slavers toward Brian in the first place — that almost had to be Garravin, who didn't take kindly to Brian's patron meddling in the affairs of the fae. Right now, Brian didn't think it was such a grand idea either, although he suspected he'd never tell Doctor Dee that.

And he would sooner let the yithoghu drag him off to their Polished Citadel than give Garravin the satisfaction, either.

Draining the last of his stamina, Brian whistled one of the Names he'd picked up in that poker game in Sonora. The dust-devil blew in on the tones, scattering dust and bone fragments into the unblinking eyes of Brian's pursuers while he searched desperately for a way out. Nothing above, behind cut off by the hunters, the river ahead, and the sides choked with weeds and mist forming around the chalky roots of a yew grove.

Wait — a yew grove? Throwing himself to the right, Brian scabbled over the thin, bony roots (hanging in gray space, but mustn't think about that) and furiously clambered inward, hunting for the mental image, the reality, of the corresponding grove he remembered — Garravin would never expect him to hide out in Fa'rie itself!

The yews parted, and there was the familiar greensward, glowing this time under a lambent moon about four times the size of the one shining down right now on his physical body, a lifetime away in Santa Fe.

Brian began to hope that he'd outsmarted his nemesis again, sheer cussed human cunning twisting him out of Garravin's coldly automatic Sidhe designs. His breathing, imaginary but still rasping in his astral ears, calmed.

Then he heard the hunting horns sound, and wondered who had outsmarted whom.

The greatest advantage the sorcerers of the Cabal possess is not necessarily their secrecy, or their allies, or even their magic. It is, fundamentally, their knowledge of the nature of reality that sets the true Cabalist, at least potentially, above

2 Chapter One: Realms and Spheres

kings and presidents, above physicists and financiers. To understand reality is to begin to control it, the fundamental aim of the Cabal since time immemorial.

2.1 The Nature of Reality

The world, as we know it, can be considered a hologram constructed from 36 component images. These images represent mystical energies of various natures, frequencies, and indexes of perceptibility. The Cabal has named these images, and hence their energies, the decans. Each decan governs (or creates, or energizes, or empowers) a certain type of experience or existence. Everything mortal humans can sense about the world derives from the interplay of these magical, decanic forces, their relative proportions determining the type of matter or energy perceived. Magical fields (which is to say, all energies) emanate from the Prime Mover, the Source of All Energy and Being within the Realm of Atziluth, what religious people term the Godhead. As the energies flow out from this Realm, they attenuate and mix, becoming more difficult to isolate, detect, or use by any but specialists or those specifically attuned to the decans. At their farthest extension, the magical energies have blended and damped down so completely that they actually become common matter. By first seeing, and then drawing upon, the powers of the decans, sorcerers can alter reality, redesign portions of the mundane hologram, transfer energies and concepts without intervening space or time — in short, they can do magic.

[Map: Reality]

2.2 The Four Realms

Although directionality proper is meaningless outside the Material Realm, human Cabalists traditionally conceived of the Four Realms as four concentric rings. At the center is the pure magic of Atziluth, around which runs Briah, the Iconic Realm, separated from Atziluth by the Abyss. On the "outer" edge of Briah, the Pearl–Bright Ocean flows between it and Yetzirah, the Astral Realm. The far edge of Yetzirah blurs into the "soft places" in Assiah, the Material Realm that we experience every day. This material world serves as the outer rim of reality, the "crust on the cosmic pizza." Hermetic magi in Alexandria eventually superseded the two–dimensional "four ring" model of the Realms with a three–dimensional construct of nested globes, with the Material at the center, the Astral "above" or "outside" that, the Iconic Realm higher still, and the ineffable reaches of Atziluth in the "highest" sphere. Although such a model does come several degrees closer to representing the magical values of the cosmos, most Cabalists stick to the disk construct, if only for greater ease in locating the various tangent locations such as the planetary spheres and elemental planes.

2.2.1 Assiah, the Material

The Material Realm, Assiah, is the world as experienced by the vast majority of humanity every day. Assiah is not just the physical world of dirt and rocks and bacteria. Assiah also comprises the energies of sunlight and plate tectonics and cosmic rays, and even such indefinables as collector's passion or panicked fury. If it can be experienced by the "normal" human animal, it is an aspect of Assiah.

The precise nature of Assiah (and of material perception itself) has been chewed over by philosophers, theologians, physicists, and mystics both within the Cabal and without. The general consensus inside the Cabal is that Assiah, as the most fully–blended and diffuse expression of the decans' magical force, creates a kind of "mask" or "shadow" over perceptions. Although such supernatural phenomena as "hunches" or *déjà vu* occur even to the most normal and

"grounded" people, the actual ability to move outside oneself, to see something besides the air and earth around you, may be actually suppressed by the nature of the Material Realm. Technically-inclined Cabalists, such as those active on the NousNet BBS, see an analogy to radio jamming; because the decans are so thoroughly mixed and omnipresent throughout Assiah, detecting any specific energies of a purer and more usable sort becomes difficult indeed.

2.2.1.1 Ley Lines and Places of Mystery

One specific result of this "jamming" is that almost all of Assiah is a *low mana* realm (p. B147). To counteract this tendency, mages can utilize the existing correspondences within Hermetic Magic (pp. 00–00) or seek out places where certain decans may resonate more strongly. A plague pit, for example, is powerfully imbued with the energies of Kurta 1, Decan of Death. Other places within Assiah, however, simply "vibrate" at a higher magical frequency. These places of power can be likened to the studs behind a lath-and-plaster wall, or to the power junctions underneath an office building. To the Cabal, they hint at the basic "blueprint" of the universe, and by mapping these points and the "ley lines" connecting them, a geomancer can control (or even usurp) the creative powers of the Godhead (see *Mappamondi*, p. 00).

Ley lines range in size from minor tendrils a few inches wide to massive "main trunk" leys yards across such as the one connecting Stonehenge with Salisbury Cathedral. Where major leys intersect (such as at Stonehenge, or the Exernstierne in Germany, or Buckingham Fountain in Chicago), the mana level rises to normal mana. (At the GM's discretion, leys can activate only at astrologically or otherwise significant times.) See pp. PM25–27 for more details on leys and ley magic.

2.2.2 Yetzirah, the Astral

Located "above" or "inside" the Material Realm is its closest shadow, Yetzirah, the Astral Realm. In appearance, the "outer" reaches of Yetzirah closely echo the "neighboring" sections of Assiah — the astral counterpart of a sunny mountain lake in the Material might glow in a Technicolor overlay, or a haunted house in Assiah could extend into Yetzirah, warping into Expressionist geometries full of shadow and menace. Many astral projectors, ghosts, and magi never move beyond this "ghost zone" into the deeper Astral.

Sufficiently "astrally charged" locations, items, or artifacts actually have a kind of astral shadow. This is how magi carry their wands or robes into the astral while projecting, for example. Forcibly removing something's astral shadow is difficult, requiring an expenditure of Fatigue equal to the energy spent to create it — and three times that amount if its creator is present either materially or astrally. (At the GM's option, psionic Mindword strikes or magical Breaking spells may significantly reduce this cost.) Something without its astral shadow is only half as effective in the Material Realm as it was previously. Magical wards, pentagrams, etc. can block an astral shadow, as can anything that blocks Astral Projection; many magi keep their most powerful artifacts in such warded sanctums.

In deeper zones, Yetzirah usually appears misty and indistinct to mortal eyes, although clearer paths and regions appear throughout the Astral Realm, usually associated with its denizens or with the magical sub-creations of sorcerers or supernatural entities. Yetzirah holds towering cities, remote prisons, vast continents, and unending expanses of luminous whiteness. Yetzirah, even more than the other Realms, is indefinable by conventional, material dimensionality. In some areas, Yetzirah may simply take on a gray formlessness, darken to impenetrability, or become a hallucinatory kaleidoscope without warning. Many Cabalists chart the eddies and shoals of the Astral Realm; rather fewer of them

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share their knowledge freely.

The Astral Realm seems to function as an "interface" between the more starkly-defined worlds within Briah, the Iconic Realm, and the perceptible world of Assiah. As an interface, or gateway, it is especially interpermeable from the Material Realm. Particularly energetic or powerful accumulations of spiritual energy (such as ghosts or other astral entities) can cross over into the perceptual world of Assiah. Similarly, "places of power" or "weak points in the fabric of reality" (depending on one's perspective) exist where the veil between the Realms can be more easily breached. In addition to ley intersections and spaces particularly resonant with the decan Iudal (p. 00), powerfully or anciently haunted houses, mass graves and battlefields, or similar places where enormous magical stresses have occurred can make "crossing over" easier. Many ghostly or spectral members of the Cabal make their home at just such locations, to enable them to easily influence events in both the Astral and Material Realms. Even some material nonhumans prefer such places; the inherent magic that pools under bridges keeps trolls alive even beneath iron railway bridges.

2.2.2.1 Entering the Inner Realms

Even in places where the Astral does not directly impinge on the Material Realm, sorcerers and psis can cross into Yetzirah (and eventually the higher Realms) using the Planar Visit (p. G45) spell or the Astral Projection psionic skill (pp. P10–11). These (and similar "out-of-body travel") techniques create an astral form or "shadow body" of the sender, known to Cabalists as the *ka*. A mage's or psi's *ka* is immune to physical attacks or dangers, since those attacks and the *ka* don't even exist in the same realm. The *ka* of a traveling mage or psi, of course, is vulnerable to any of the astral or magical dangers of the Realms, such as magical or psionic attacks by rival mages, bands of roving egregores or yithoghu, and astral storms or riptides. The Astral Realm is *normal mana* (p. B147).

Note that neither the Ethereal Body spell (p. M72) nor the Insubstantiality ability (p. CI59) translates the subject to Yetzirah, but simply transform the physical body from flesh to ether. The caster remains in Assiah, simply "rotated" out of phase with the immediately physical universe. By contrast, the Plane Shift (p. G46) spell actually sends the caster physically into the targeted realm, which can prove rapidly fatal in areas such as the Elemental Plane of Fire (sidebar, p. 00). Even in the "normal" areas of Yetzirah, some sort of magical armor or protection may turn out to be necessary, given the changeable nature and frequent dangers of that Realm.

2.2.2.2 Traveling in the Inner Realms

In Yetzirah, conventional dimensionality simply does not apply outside the Astral Realm's tangent connections with Assiah, in the "ghost zone," and with Briah, at the Pearl-Bright Ocean. In Briah, although the geometry is plainer (there is, for example, an "up" and a "down"), it remains unearthly; for example, distances vary with the traveler, not with the geography. The actual mapping of these realms, and navigation within them, can be complex. Rather than conventional geography, common associations (between a stone ring in Ireland and its other side in Fa'rie), frequent interaction (between a morbid writer's dreamworld and the astral reflection of a haunted house he often visited), or common elements (between any two bright scarlet-colored regions) create "adjacency." Occasionally, a powerful entity (or one that strongly dominates a given area of the Realm) can enforce location, at least relative to something else. For example, a magically-aware dreamer can place an astral thorn-barrier around his dreamworld to slow intruders, a Master can force anyone traveling to or from a pocket-dimensional prison to pass a guardian spirit, a god can build a terrace of realities and initiatory encounters on the path to his court. As a rule of thumb, this requires a successful Will roll at –15; to violate such geography, the traveler must win a Quick Contest of Wills at –10. Various spells, maps, and artifacts can

make either process simpler, reinforce it, or work around it entirely.

2.2.2.3 Manipulating the Inner Realms

Sufficiently powerful entities can manipulate the ectoplasmic fabric of the Astral Realm, building anything from a small penknife to an astral airship to the Polished Citadel of the yithoghu. Within Briah, although iconic natures remain relatively fixed (because they are tied to the decans and to human imagination), sufficiently powerful eikones can alter the appearance, access, and contents of their own domains. Others choose to bring in the elements they seek to include from elsewhere, as Minos does for Atlantis (p. 00).

There are any number of ways to create something from ectoplasm: psionic Telekinesis (usually combined with the suitable Craft or Armoury skill), Lucid Dreaming, various magical spells such as Create Object, and so forth. Spirits can use the Poltergeist Effect (p. 00) or Probability Manipulation (p. 00) to do so, albeit slowly. Contests between two ectoplasmic creations should default to contests between their creators, either a straight battle of Will vs. Will or a contest of skills (magical, psionic, or both). A weak magus can create a mighty castle — but a powerful eikone would be able to cut his way through its "stone" walls with an ectoplasmic butter knife. That said, GMs are free to grant modifiers for "correct" attacks — the Astral Realm rewards symbolism. The same eikone might find his ectoplasmic battering ram even more effective at knocking down an astral castle wall, even with less energy invested in its creation.

2.2.2.4 Dreamworlds

As far as the Cabal can determine, all sentient, material creatures dream. (Cabalistic rumor hints that some very powerful entities within Briah also dream. Entering the dreamworld of a god might grant power or insight worth the tremendous danger inherent in such an attempt.) Their dreamworlds act as a kind of personalized astral dimension, built using highly individual imagery or concepts drawn from the dreamer's life experience, memories, and beliefs. Individual dreamworlds exist in bubbles within Yetzirah, linked to Assiah by the physical body of the dreamer. Entering an individual dreamworld usually requires the Dream Projection spell (p. G21), spirit (p. 00) or psionic Dream Travel (p. 00), or some other magical or psychotronic mechanism. Entering an individual dreamworld from the Material Realm, like entering any other area of Yetzirah, creates a *ka*. However, a *ka* is vulnerable to lucid dreaming by the dreamworld's dreamer; the dreamer's lucid persona can attack the *ka* just as any astral entity does. A lucid dreamer who is also a mage or psi can add half his skill in Lucid Dreaming (p. CI142) to his skill at magic or psionic techniques within his own dreamworld only.

All individual dreamworlds connect to each other in Nod, the land of dreams within Briah, the Iconic Realm (see below). A lucid dreamer, even one who is not technically a mage, can potentially travel between his own dreamworld and Nod. Similarly, a *ka* can theoretically "backtrack" from Nod to an individual dreamworld, although finding one individual dream track among billions takes either magical divination or inside information from one of the more powerful (or knowledgeable) inhabitants of Nod. The true nature and function of Nod remain unclear; some Cabalists believe that Nod is simply the reflection of all Briah as it exists on the edge of individual dreamworlds, while others (especially the oneirically-obsessed Corvae Hermanubis Lodge) believe that it has a separate archetypal existence. Nod sits on an island, in an estuary of the Pearl-Bright Ocean at the mouth of two rivers, behind a high brick wall with two gates. The Gate of Horn, which traditionally emits true dreams, bestrides a major tributary flow of the decan Ruax (p. 00), and the Gate of Ivory (the traditional source of false dreams) likewise focuses a powerful manifestation of the decan Methiax (p. 00). Within the wall roils a surrealistic panoply of dream imagery from Jungian archetypal figures to masturbatory fantasies to fanged beasts of nightmare. Nod is ruled by a triumvirate consisting of Chabuiyah, Lady of Love (the Aethyr

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of Methiax), Deneyal, Lady of Dominion (the Aethyr of Ruax), and Hypnos, the god of sleep. Since the Aethyrs usually have more pressing business elsewhere, Hypnos and his servitors have the most immediate influence and power within Nod.

2.2.2.5 Fa'rie

The land of Fa'rie is the domain of a specific race of ultraterrestrials (p. 00), the fae, who interacted with Assiah repeatedly and openly for about three millennia, primarily in various parts of the European continent. As a response to Garravin's strike for domination of the Cabal (p. 00), King Oberon and Queen Titania decided to remove their domain from close association with Assiah, completely isolating it on the outskirts of Yetzirah in the year 1212. Individual fae (in troops or singly) have wandered the trods between Fa'rie and rural Europe since then, and individual humans (most notably John Dee and William Butler Yeats) have attempted to reopen full traffic between Fa'rie and Europe in the last millennium, but with dubious and debatable results.

Fa'rie, although mutable by sufficiently powerful fae, usually resembles a rural area of northwestern Europe on a perfect spring afternoon. The palace of Oberon and Titania rises in the center of the domain, with a "goblin marketplace" on the border. Many trods, or pathways, run from Fa'rie to Assiah, still laid down in the ancient pathways, especially at loops or nodes of the ley network (p. 00). Other trods link Fa'rie to the Forest of Arden, deep within Briah. From Earth, even non-mages can (at the proper time of year, or with the right blood) find themselves stumbling into Fa'rie, into the Astral Realm from an Irish hilltop or a Tuscan grove. The relative solidity of Fa'rie makes it a common destination for material travelers elsewhere in the Realms, as well.

2.2.2.6 The Pearl-Bright Ocean

At the deepest, inmost edge of Yetzirah swirls an ocean mighty enough to contain worlds. In fact, it does; this is the Archetypal Ocean of the Unconscious, the "face of the Deep," connected to all oceans and to the Elemental Plane of Water. Its tides and currents, eddying around the Isle of Glass and other legendary landmarks, slowly trace out a mappamond (p. 00), mirroring the flows of magic throughout the worlds. Somewhere on these currents floats the True Sargasso, where shipwrecks from all across the Realms float, mired together within a vast expanse of seaweed. In the deepest trenches swims Leviathan, the great sea monster the size of a continent. Her hatchlings sometimes escape down the murky crevasses to surface in isolated lochs or "weak spots" in reality such as the Bermuda Triangle. Similarly, the *Flying Dutchman* and its kindred ghost ships cross from the Pearl-Bright Ocean to the night seas of Assiah, making port in plague-stricken coastal towns, or in the phantom city occasionally visible in the Straits of Messina.

Such mirages may be reflections of (or imperfectly-closed gateways to) Tritonis, the City Under The Sea, which marks the sea-bottom boundary between Yetzirah and Briah. Merfolk, tritons, nereids and other oceanic beings both spiritual and material dwell here. Many other underwater ruins and conurbations appear beneath the waves of the Pearl-Bright Ocean, but unlike Tritonis their locations shift and ebb with the currents of memory and magic. Other significant underwater locations include Davy Jones' Locker (a realm of the pirate dead and coral-covered treasure galleons), the voudun Rada spirit realm Guinée, the desolate Lemurian metropolis (see p. 00), and the mirror-moon captured beneath the Lake of Nemi in Italy. Those who know the way can walk from the silvery beaches below that reflection to the *maria* on the surface of the Moon.

2.2.3 Briah, the Iconic

On the other side of the Pearl–Bright Ocean from Yetzirah is Briah, the Iconic Realm, the Realm of Forms. Within Briah, the energies of the decans are strong enough to show clearly and separately; images and scenery are more richly symbolic, colors purer and cleaner, and actions more ritualistic and significant, than in lower Realms. Briah is a *very high mana* plane (p. B147). Travelers within Briah face fewer sudden dangers than in Yetzirah or Assiah; this realm is more organized and less chaotic. However, here ignorance becomes an even greater threat. Most of the denizens of Briah are proud creatures used to exercising unquestioned power within their own domains. Offending the god of some isolated sphere, or accidentally interfering with an aethyr's ritual dramaturgy, can bring down a storm of inhuman wrath on the unwitting visitor's head. Communication, negotiation, courtesy, and reputation are vital coins of the realm here; Briah's spirits are more used to worship than bluster. However, knowing the rules remains crucial. Even the most kindly–disposed eikone (or malevolent ultraterrestrial) may find her hands tied by the laws of the Realm, and justice at the hands of the Archangels is always sure, and often stern.

2.2.3.1 The Archangels

Four immense, beautiful, winged beings stand equidistant from each other, defining the four quarters of Briah. Gabriel, Archangel of the West, holds a giant beryl chalice of pure Elemental Water. Uriel, Archangel of the North, holds an immense platter of salt–crystal, covered in Elemental Earth. Raphael, Archangel of the East, brandishes a lightning wand of Elemental Air. Michael, Archangel of the South, wields the traditional flaming sword, with pure Elemental Fire lambent within its opal pommel. They serve as pillars of the Realms, and as viceroys and messengers of the Atziluthic Godhead to mere sentience. Less reverent Cabalists conceive of these Archangels as transformers, "stepping down" the power of ineffable Atziluth into the still inhumanly–bright, but comprehensible, energies of Briah. Their eidolons, the angels, administer what high justice the Realms require, stepping in when aethyrs quarrel or the Realms are endangered. Occasionally, the Archangels insert themselves into disputes for unknown reasons or on seeming whim. There is no appeal from their judgement.

2.2.3.2 Atlantis the Lost

Within Briah, on an arm of the Pearl–Bright Ocean, bustles the port city Atlantis. Here, ruled by the eldritch Sage King Minos (an eikone of near–godlike power), spirits, ultraterrestrials, ghosts, dreamers, and not a few Cabalists work to rebuild the antediluvian world from the legends and memories of Earth. Spiritual triremes, airships, and clippers sail across the Four Realms, alert for artifacts, plans, materials, or people to add to the walls and minarets of Minos' renescent utopia. Atlantis' marketplaces hold treasures from all times known or forgotten, from roc's–egg white pigment to Chinese phoenix feathers to duralumin fountain pens crafted from derelict zeppelins. Aside from yithoghu slavers, almost any traveler with something to trade or sell is welcome in Atlantis. Many Atlantean traders (or their factors) operate in the areas of Yetzirah closely parallel to the Material Realm; Atlantean ships have been known to cross into Assiah for a particularly good cargo, and many Cabalists find lucrative work searching out rare objets d'art, maps, or minerals for Minos' galleons. Since so much of Atlantis either originated in, or is strongly connected to, Assiah, it is even more solid than Fa'rie — parts of it are actually material, and could be removed to Assiah. Minos' plan may, in fact, involve translating Atlantis back into the Material Realm when its reconstruction is complete.

2.2.4 The Abyss

Between Briah and Atziluth yawns a vast chasm, the Abyss. Here, the failed and negative energies are strongest, shadowed from the direct light of Atziluth by enormous walls of un-potential. All the negative and tainted elemental energies flourish within the Abyss; shrouds of sulfurous green flame lick the walls, pools of actinic sludge foam down the sides of the canyons, mephitic blasts of putrid gas well up and choke those attempting to fly across. Within the Abyss dwell demons, who reject the Godhead and the Archangels. They seek to enter the other Realms through cracks in reality, some of which extend into the Material. Even more dangerous to the Cabal, and to Assiah, are the qliploth (p. 00), who lurk in the Vale of Hinnom, a crack in the very bottom channel of the Abyss.

2.2.4.1 Bahamut

Bahamut, the Greatest Beast, walks along the bottom of the Abyss, grazing on demonic corpses, the fungal blooms from qliploth sludge—heaps, overflowings from Atziluth, impolite strangers, and other bulk matter. If Bahamut stayed in any one place for long, he would denude it utterly and starve (albeit within centuries), so he slowly ambles around the entire Abyss leaving even grosser devastation in his wake. One popular theory, promulgated by the 16th century Cabalist (and kabbalist) Simon Caphtorius, holds that Bahamut makes a complete circuit every 22,600 years. So enormous is he that if he raises his head, he is at eye level with the edge of the Abyss; his extended tail and trunk would span the Abyss from side to side. Although crossing the Abyss by climbing along Bahamut would seem to be the most practical method, no Cabalist survives who admits trying it.

2.2.4.2 The Sword Bridge

The way from Briah into Atziluth passes over a razor-thin bridge of perfect sharpness in the shape of an enormous sword, edge upward, with its pommel in the gatehouse of Atziluth and its point buried in the rock of Briah. Travelers crossing it have portions of themselves carved away: memories, skills, personality traits, and even physical pieces fall into the Abyss, where they become food or ectoplasm for spirits. Some of these cut-off parts slide to the underside of the blade to nurture strange blooms in the Abyssal and Briatic air. An entire jungle ecology of winged simian demons has evolved in the magical moss and epiphyta growing beneath the bridge. These entities feed on each other, on flying (or falling) entities within reach, and on the poisonous fruits that grow in the tangle of personality flaws and memories clinging to the sword's lower edge. Often, these demons will attack a vulnerable-appearing voyager as he makes his tentative way across the Sword Bridge; by now their predations dismember more travelers than the Sword Bridge kills. Cabalists who seek to enter Atziluth traditionally prefer to seek a powerful demon on the shore of the Abyss, the Dweller on the Threshold (p. 00), defeat him in single combat, and force him to transport them across the Abyss instead.

2.2.5 Atziluth, the Spiritual

Those who have returned from Atziluth describe it, haltingly, as perfection. The most common images involve golden sunlight, an endless glowing whiteness, a serried row of hypergeometrical forms, or a smooth green meadow stretching to infinity. In Atziluth dwells the Uncreated Source, the Prime Mover, the First Being — in short, God. To become an Ipsissimus, a member of the Cabal must enter Atziluth and return. Since each traveler sees his own Atziluth, checking the story of a claimant is impossible. Especially cynical (or paranoid) Cabalists believe that every Grand Master who claims the rank is lying, and that no living being has ever entered Atziluth and returned. Why, they ask, would a magus reject perfection and walk in the cruder Realms having once tasted the ultimate? Other Cabalists wonder the same, and question

the supposed perfection of Atziluth rather than the integrity of Ipsissimi. Perhaps the Godhead dwelling within Atziluth has its own agenda, and sends its chosen servants back to the Realms for some purpose it chooses not to share with lesser beings. Some Gnostic Cabalists fear that the entity within Atziluth has imprisoned or slain the true Godhead and seeks to pervert the universe, using the Cabal to destroy everything truly representing the actual Prime Mover. These are the kinds of questions that consume and obsess the Brotherhood of Phlebas (sidebar, p. 00), among others. The GM can decide which, if any, of these theories is correct and how, if at all, it will affect player characters who manage to attain the highest Realm.

2.2.6 Parallel Worlds

The default *GURPS Cabal* campaign presents only a single Earth and attendant planes, recognizing the basically geocentric notions of classical magical theory. However, nothing prevents a GM from extending Assiah into a fifth or sixth dimension, composed of any number of Earths. Whether one Earth (usually ours) is the "true" Earth and the others merely shadows can affect (or not) spellcasting, magical rules, and so forth. Other Earths can hold parallel histories (including parallel Cabals!) or even divergent or entirely alien sentient races; travelers from these Earths might be able to cross into ours through the Astral Realm, or through specific weak points, crossover areas, or magical doorways such as the Gates of Thoth. Particularly ambitious and powerful magi might have built other Earths as private empires, hideouts, experiments, or by accident. Given the infinity of space within the Astral Realm, these "pocket Earths" could be solidified ectoplasm entirely contained within a crystal ball or wardrobe on Assiah. What happens to such a pocket world, or its inhabitants, when its creator dies or loses interest might make for interesting gaming.

2.2.7 The Anthropic Principle

In the Hermetic world-view, mankind is truly "the measure of all things." The Microcosm, human beings, reflect the Macrocosm, all the great powers and movements of the planets and the Realms. And vice versa. This basic truth is the key to magic; because humans encompass all of the Macrocosm within themselves, they can ascend through the Realms and manipulate the magical energies that also encompass all of reality. However, human magi not only reflect and refract the universe; universal constants reflect humanity. Everything is thus personified; all energy, all matter, all locations, all planets, everything can be described, visualized *and interacted with* (given the correct summoning spell, prayer, or ritual) as a recognizably human entity. Families have their Lares, or family spirits, powerful or influential people (both alive and dead, though mostly dead) have *daimones* that embody their luck and skills, and every place from a patch of grass in Laos to the Chrysler Building has its own spirit of place or *genius loci*. Even sufficiently important concepts or archetypes have human faces, the mighty *eikones* of Briah, the Iconic Plane. The decans themselves, the fundamental building blocks of the cosmos, are personified in the Aethyrs.

2.2.8 Into The Astral Without Gun Or Camera

In the "default" *GURPS Cabal* campaign, the trappings of modernity such as guns and computers and so forth remain on the Material Realm, occasionally leaking into human dreamscapes and memory palaces. Outside those places and beyond the walls of Nod, the "feel" of the technology and culture remains resolutely within the Renaissance of the Cabal's rebirth. There is a certain implied conservatism to magical imagery, which the GM can simply enforce by fiat. ("When you remove the revolver from the Colonel's dream, it transforms into a Roman shortsword.") If the PCs use a Stasis Box (p. 00) to bring in a high-tech item, remember that many devices from compasses to computers simply will not function outside the Material Realm. Likewise, the lack of a consistent perspective or laws of physics will reduce the accuracy of

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rifles and the performance of ultralight aircraft. As a general rule, the GM may wish to assess a –5 penalty to use for each TL above 4 of the item.

In all these matters, use your best judgement about your preferred feel for the game. Occasional departures from the TL4 ceiling (Atlantean airships, or yithoghu electroshock machines, for example) should exist to accentuate the flavors of musty antiquity and morbid romance. A "sorcerous ops" game involving gunrunning Cabalists assisting a rebellion against the Chinese gods on Briah or launching an aerial bombardment of the yithoghu's Polished Citadel against its spectral vampiric pterosaur guardians would have a very different flavor. So, too would a technothriller game of astral bathyspheres outfitted with Kirlian sensors and alchemical–emerald lasers churning through the depths of the Pearl–Bright Ocean or plumbing the astral void for fragments of the First Creation. It might even be a very interesting flavor, but be sure you want to go down that road before you allow modern weapons or technology into the Inner Realms.

2.2.9 Planetary Spheres

The planets and the signs of the zodiac powerfully influence the nature and power of the magical fields. The zodiacal signs are fixed on the upper surface (or inner edge, depending on one's perspective) of Briah, "diffraction gratings" within which magics are concentrated and through which they emerge. The planets, those "wandering stars," move on their courses across the Realms. Each planetary sphere connects to its actual physical planet in the Material Realm and to one of the sephiroth of the Tree of Life (sidebar, p. 00); more usefully, each one can be located within the "sky" of Yetzirah or Briah. The domains within Briah of any gods closely associated with the planets (Nergal, Ares, or Mars with Mars; Amaterasu, Ra, or Apollo with the Sun, for example) hold stairways or mountains leading to their respective planetary spheres, as well. Within the planetary spheres, spells corresponding with the governing planet are cast at +5, those of other planets at –5, and those of opposing planets at –10. Even elsewhere in the Realms, suitable materials (those listed on the *Planetary Correspondences* table, p. 00) taken from the planetary spheres add +2 to corresponding spells and +4 to skill rolls to create corresponding alchemical elixirs (see p. 00). Materials used in alchemy, of course, sublime away and cannot be reused.

The spheres, their natures, their governing heptarchs (powerful eikones also known as "Olympic spirits"), and a few of their connections to other planes follow.

The Moon appears as a beautiful sandy country containing many large seas, everywhere lit by a silvery radiance under a purple sky. Its ruler, the heptarch Phul, appears as a beautiful maiden holding a bow and arrows. In addition to the sephirah of Yesod, the Pearl–Bright Ocean, and the Lake of Nemi in Italy, the sphere of Moon adjoins Fa'rie and Nod in its orbit.

Mercury continuously changes and shifts: fiery blasts open up great cracks in the ground, from which fogs spray only to condense into rain. Lighting, vegetation, and geography continuously alter as well. Its Olympic spirit, Ophiel, can take any shape he wishes, although she often has either the head or tail of a serpent. The sphere of Mercury intersects the sephirah of Hod and all four elemental planes, as well as Atlantis and the hidden Inca citadel of Machu Picchu.

Venus resembles nothing so much as a vast ocean green with mineral salts and floating bergs of seaweed and lotus. Its sky roils with yellowish–green clouds at all times, occasionally opening up in drenching deluges. Hagith, the heptarch of Venus, appears as a beautiful mermaid. Along its orbit, Venus touches upon the sephirah of Netzach, the Elemental Plane

of Water, the Pearl–Bright Ocean, Atlantis, and the ancient harbor of Paphos in Cyprus.

The Sun is governed by the heptarch Och, a golden king with a crested helmet. The sphere resembles a tropical veldt ringed by jungles and thronged by packs of lions and antelope. Its passage across the Realms transects the sephirah Tiphareth, the Elemental Plane of Fire, the city of El Dorado in Briah, and the ruins of Akhetaton in Egypt.

Mars has a large spirit population; in addition to the normal servants and courtiers, many of the more quarrelsome and warlike spirits, ultraterrestrials, and lesser eikones have emigrated (or been banished) to this planet. They serve in the armies of the armored giant Phalec, heptarch of Mars. Many of them inhabit pre–existing bodies (probably grown by the Lemurians unguessable eons ago); others possess enough energy to permanently materialize on this sphere. A network of pyramids and cities, joined by canals, has sprung up in the shallow plains of Mars between the volcanoes that provide Mars with metals in the form of molten iron lava. Occasionally Martian war–craft emerge from the planet as it passes over the topless towers of Ilium in Briah or Mount Erebus in Antarctica, although the sephirah Geburah and the Elemental Plane of Fire present greater obstacles to Phalec's raiders.

Jupiter swirls with roiling clouds, some of which solidly support oaken feast halls and cedar temples, and some of which part and dissolve under the wings of the peacock–dragon Bethor, heptarch of the sphere. His home adjoins the sephirah Chesed, the Elemental Plane of Air, and passes above Camelot in Briah and the Empire State Building in New York City.

Saturn is a sphere of dark, rich soil littered with the skeletons of dead giants and monsters. Aratron, heptarch of Saturn, is a cowled, bearded figure in a black robe. Saturn's slow procession grinds along the sephirah Binah, the Elemental Plane of Earth, the Abyss near the Sword Bridge, and Ayers Rock in Australia.

2.2.10 The Zodiacal Houses

The fixed zodiacal signs each have a House within Briah, in which their magical energies predominate, and within which similar magical resonances exist (corresponding spells cast at +5, other sign spells at –5, opposing sign spells at –10). Since the zodiacal signs are fixed at the edge of Briah and don't immediately connect to anywhere in particular, Cabalists seldom pass through their Houses or invoke their eikones.

2.2.11 The Elemental Planes

Although the thirty–six decans compose all existence, the original four elements still serve as the basic magical constants. It is, in fact, possible to define the decans on the basis of their elemental composition, although practical magical theory has moved beyond such Aristotelian reductionism. The decans of the four elements serve as "load–bearing beams" of the cosmos, each one welling up from an infinite core, its elemental plane. At the center of each plane, only the purest irresistible force of that element can exist, howling wind, swelling water, roaring fire, crushing earth.

The "surfaces" of the elemental planes, where they appear tangent to the Realms proper, are considerably more accessible than the pure planes themselves. Each Realm holds an entrance to one of the four elemental planes. The Boreal Stream blows across Yetzirah, with birds and griffins and orchids and dirigibles and every airborne thing hanging in the infinite distance below the Plane of Air. The Pearl–Bright Ocean, the border between Yetzirah and Briah, covers the whirlpool entrance to the Elemental Plane of Water beneath Briah, just as the volcanoes of Crete lead (for those who

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know the roads) to the cyclopean entrance halls of the Plane of Earth beneath Assiah. From inside Atziluth, the Central Fire dances, and its sparks shower down across the Four Realms, opening flickering doorways to the Plane of Elemental Fire. Each Archangel is also connected to its respective elemental plane (p. 00).

Where the elemental planes intersect, they give rise to para–elemental regions, dappled places where matter rests in a hazy state of indeterminacy. Mages who wish to draw on the elemental forces sometimes operate from these subdimensions, where the raw onslaught of elemental force is muted. Alert Cabalists encounter beings from these para–elemental regions (see *Para–Elementals*, p. 00) in the Realms almost as often as they do pure elementals.

2.2.12 Psionics

In *GURPS Cabal*, the Hermetic–magical viewpoint is the truth, the way reality actually functions. Some Cabalistic groups, such as the Caput Knoumis Lodge or the loose confraternity of mages and psis within the Clear Thought Society, work to reconcile magical reality and psionic practice. Theories range from psis as unconscious magicians to magic as clairvoyant, telepresent, psychokinesis. Some purists of both stripes hold to extreme versions of those theories, and Cabalist magicians periodically attempt to downgrade the position of psis within their ranks. (Cabalist psis seldom have the numbers or the leverage to return the favor, although the psionic Grand Master Dr. Fang no doubt wishes he could.) In rules terms, however, psionics function in the same realms as magic: psionic Astral Projection and a magical Planar Visit both get you to Yetzirah; the Dream Projection spell (p. G21) and the psionic Dream Travel advantage (p. 00) can each transport their users to the same dreamworld. Psionic attacks and magical spells can both harm yithoghu or astral parasites. Although the specifics of effects, and the efforts needed to create them, differ, the two disciplines are both "supernatural" to the slumbering outside world, and both grant great power to the user. Which, in the final analysis, is all the Cabal truly cares about.

2.2.13 Memory Palaces

A practitioner of the Great Art of Memory (p. 00) creates a structure that both organizes and contains the memories of his experiences and learning. Traditionally, this structure takes the form of an enormous building, with the rooms, décor, architecture, and so forth keyed to specific memories. Although a museum or mansion is most common, some users of the Great Art shape their recollections into castles, formal gardens, theaters, libraries, or labyrinths. In general, such a memory palace shares much in common with a personal dreamworld; it is, after all, a kind of waking dream, an active organizing of the unconscious.

A practitioner of the Great Art needs only to spend a round of Concentration and make a Great Art of Memory skill roll to enter his memory palace; for an outsider, the task is more difficult. While within his own memory palace, its builder can add half his skill in Great Art of Memory to his skill with any magic or psionic techniques affecting those inside it. Invited outsiders may enter (as spirits or *ka* forms) from any location in the Realms that the palace's maintainer has visited; he must be in his own memory palace, recalling that visit, to "open a door" from that chamber to the location. Uninvited outsiders must find a hidden way in. Careless memorizers will incorporate elements of their dreams into their memory palace; this can create doorways between one's memory palace and one's dreamworld. To avoid this, skilled practitioners of the Great Art keep vital dream information in closed books or sealed snow–globes in their memory palaces. Doorways between palaces are harder to close; entering from a connected palace is possible via any number of techniques, such as a Lockmaster spell (p. M70), or a psionic Mental Blow, for the unsubtle. A married couple who both utilize the Great Art will have many connecting passageways between their memory palaces. A magical mentor can

easily build a "back door" into his student's memory palace while training him.

2.2.14 The Sephiroth

Both Cabalistic and kabbalistic scholars (see sidebar, p. 00) have derived another framework for understanding the underlying structure of reality, that of the Otz Chaim, the Tree of Life. Some Cabalists believe that the Tree remains a convenient metaphor or an eidolon of some entity within Briah; others argue that each Realm has its own Tree leading to the Realm above. Conventional wisdom, however, holds that a single Tree descends from the unguessable glory of Atziluth to the base world of Assiah, passing through ten sephiroth, or spheres, in the process. Magi who devote themselves to kabbalistic study can enter these sephiroth as they would any other plane in the Realms, creating an alternate route to Atziluth. However, each sephirah must be entered in turn, always beginning with Malkuth. Taking the sephiroth out of order, or trespassing without specific ritual preparation, can result in the violator's astral destruction by the Archangels or his opening to qliphothic infestation. (The more Gnostic Cabalists argue that the sephiroth are already home to jealous guardian archons who oppose magical exploration on principle.) At the GM's discretion, a spellcaster who has actually achieved a given sephirah may add +2 while casting any associated spell at any time; within a given sephirah, only spells associated with that sephirah may be cast. (For associations of the sephiroth to the decans, see the *Decan Reference Table*, p. 00.) The ten sephiroth, their definitions, natures, and any associated elements, planetary spheres, or magical verbs (in parentheses; see p. M91 or *Gematria*, p. 00) follow.

Kether: "The Crown," it is the closest emanation to the Godhead itself, and manifests as a brilliant white light within Atziluth. It is the Primum Mobile above all planetary spheres, and the unification of all the elements into a single essence. (Create)

Chokmah: "Wisdom," it is the highest sephirah in Briah. It resembles a rainbow starfield, a mosaic tesseract of all colors seen and unseen. It comprises the Zodiac in its entirety, and the root of elemental fire and air that form the fixed stars. (Sense)

Binah: "Understanding" makes the forms of Briah comprehensible. It can be seen as a black cave full of rich smells of food. Binah grazes the sphere of Saturn, and deep within it is the true Hippocrene spring of elemental water and the lush cornucopia of elemental earth. (Communicate)

Chesed: "Mercy" is one of the two extensions of the Tree from Briah into Yetzirah. This sephirah appears as a brilliant blue temple mirrored in blue airy skies. It abuts the sphere of Jupiter. (Protect/Guard; Warn)

Geburah: "Severity," the other extension of the Tree into Yetzirah from Binah, appears as an arsenal of heated iron chariots; the weapons, walls, and armored figures all glow with ruddy fire. Unsurprisingly, Geburah strongly connects to the sphere of Mars. (Weaken)

Tiphareth: "Beauty," is the highest sephirah in Yetzirah. Suffused with a golden lambency, and guarded by lions, it resembles the first savannas, where mankind awoke to sentience. Its dry, shimmering heat denotes its fiery nature, its golden light emanates from the sphere of the Sun. (Heal)

Netzach: "Victory" hangs through Yetzirah in space, a pillar of cloud and storm lashing an emerald–green sea, powerfully tied to water. Across its tumultuous waves is the sphere of Venus. (Control)

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Hod: "Splendor" shines from the orderly lines and figures drawn within an infinite latticework of deep orange cloth-of-bronze, shot through with fractal, threaded patterns. If a magus follows the patterns long enough across Yetzirah, they will resolve into the gateway to the sphere of Mercury. It holds the nodal point where the four elemental corners meet, somewhere at the center of its pattern. (Transform)

Yesod: "Foundation" here refers to the occult structures underlying the visible, not to the physical act of founding. It serves as the mirrored, whirring interface between Assiah and Yetzirah; a realm of hidden passages, hissing pistons and lever arms, the motors of the world. Its ever-turning, unmappable nature reveals its ties to air; its deep purple light shines down through a million gratings and kaleidoscopic skylights from the sphere of the Moon. (Move)

Malkuth: "The Kingdom" is the root sephirah, tied not only to elemental earth but to the material Earth in Assiah. The Tree of Life manifests on the Material Plane within the Holy of Holies, a subterranean chamber beneath Temple Mount in Jerusalem, visible only to magical sight. Kabbalists, or scions of the Levite priesthood of ancient Judah can also see the Tree's roots and trunk, but very few of the lost and scattered Levites know the words that will open the chamber physically. Hence, most travelers enter even physical Malkuth astrally. (Strengthen)

2.2.15 Daath

Daath, the hidden eleventh sephirah, lies between Binah and Chokmah, the "worm that gnaws" at the Tree of Life. The coincidence between Daath and the Hebrew word for "knowledge" has led some theorists, most significantly Aleister Crowley, to suggest that entering Daath is necessary in order to cross the Abyss. The Cabal, however, believes that Daath actually leads to the anti-universe of the qliphoth, the "Hell reality" created by the sundering of the Aborted Creation. The powerful demon Choronzon, Breaker of Thought and Form, is said to guard the entrance to Daath, slaying all who seek to cross. Choronzon's motive remains unclear. Is he recruiting only the bravest and strongest magi for the qliphoth? Is he serving a penance imposed by an Archangel, or by some other overwhelming force? Is he a convenient lie told by the Grand Masters to cover up their own failure to enter Atziluth — or their own treasonous collaboration with the qliphothic ur-lords?

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The walls of the old tunnel beneath Marseilles twisted in ropy coils, branching and knotting in an almost-discernible geometry where the passage forked.

Petrified wood, thought Brian. Definitely one of Garravin's old lairs. Now, if I could just figure out where the heart of this particular labyrinth falls . . .

A scrape, and then an echoed clank broke the Cabalist's train of thought. Voices, with guttural Corsican accents — Garravin's men, at least three of them.

Quickly, and silently, Brian dug in his pockets as he dug in his memory, running through the correspondences that John Dee had so meticulously drilled into him at Oxford — and elsewhere. Phoub 1, first decan of Leo, also governed by the Sun — that meant a golden lion can focus the star or the planet. Brian slipped a museum-quality Mycenaean statuette off his key chain and onto a loop of golden wire from his jacket lining. Slipping that around his head, he felt the energies of Leo surge toward him. Now for the decan: one of the little Pyrex tubes in his belt held saffron, harvested at sunrise on Midsummer from an old temple to Apollo in the Ukrainian steppe. Brian didn't allow himself the distraction of remembering who had harvested it for him, or what had happened to her afterward. The delicate taste blended horribly with the stick of Big Red chewing gum, but he didn't have anything else cinnamon.

Chewing as rapidly as he dared, he pulled the sticky wad out of his mouth and drew a solar cross through the air over his face, murmuring the litany of Yelayel's Unseen Squire in haut-Goidelic.

Nothing for a desperate two seconds, while the noises grew uncomfortably loud nearby.

Then the air shimmered, and Brian knew the Invisibility had taken effect.

The three men moved past where Brian stood, and after a murmured argument took the right fork.

Well, that narrows it down, Brian mused. Pulling the Colt from his belt, Brian crept after the three killers.

Hermetic magic provides the physics of the magical universe, the unifying canon lore of Cabalistic mages, and the avenues to power for those capable enough — or obsessed enough — to travel them. Sages have pored over musty codices, bargained with fearsome entities, and performed extraordinary feats of intuition and mathematics to derive these truths. Measuring and deducing the delicate interplay of magical forces, the Cabal has learned to tease out the tiniest fragments of decan energy, refract them through the mind and body, and alter reality itself with their power.

3.1 First Principles

3.1.1 In Theory

According to piously self-serving legend, Khaibitu-na-Khonsu, the first Grand Master of the Cabal, learned the truths of magic from the god Thoth. The Greek magicians, who rediscovered, refined, and expanded the Egyptian magical

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secrets, identified Thoth with their own god of secrets and language, Hermes. As Thoth–Hermes, he became the patron of magic, knowledge, and the secrets, a figure of reverence to mystagogues and librarians alike. After Alexander the Great's conquest of Egypt, the Greek influence on the Cabal became paramount, and Thoth–Hermes became known as Hermes Trismegistos, the "Thrice–Great."

According to open lore, Hermes Trismegistos (sometimes identified with the 3rd Dynasty Egyptian architect Imhotep, who later became god of medicine) was "philosopher, priest, and king." To Renaissance occultists (who translated and built on Alexandrian lore), his threefold mastery of *magia*, *cabala*, and *chymia* explained his title. To the Cabal, all three are facets of the same knowledge. *Chymia*, alchemy, explains the true nature of matter and reality — that illuminated power can spring from seemingly base matter. *Cabala*, or kabbalah (see p. 00) the study of the emanations of mystic power and their specific interrelations, measures the precise mechanisms by which the universe exists. And *magia* — magic — is the practical result. Theory, measurement, and practice. These truths and techniques remained hidden, at first by their extraordinary difficulty, and later by the selfishness of those who commanded them. Hence, they acquired the name of their half–legendary inventor, the god of secrets: Hermetic magic.

3.1.2 And Practice

Hermetic magic, at its most basic, involves creating a link between the sorcerer and the source of magical energy, the pure decan field at the wellsprings of Briah. By manipulating his mental state (in game terms, concentrating on the spell), the magician can visualize the decan powering his spell and use himself as a prism to refract, or lens to focus, his chosen "wavelength" of magical energy onto a subject. The scholars and experimenters of the Cabal have made this difficult and draining process easier by determining what kinds of physical elements, planetary or zodiacal emanations, or other qualities correspond, or resonate, with the various decans. By physically altering or drawing on his material (or astral) environment, by creating or utilizing resonant materials that correspond with the given decan, the sorcerer can amplify his chosen magical energies. Then, he must will the spell to happen, casting it and letting it flow from the world of his will to the experiential world outside him.

To maintain a spell, the caster must either be able to pay the necessary energy cost unmodified or keep the resonances that reduced said energy cost active. The simplest way to do this is to remain in the exact environment in which the spell was cast. However, even here, the GM may rule that some of the modifiers decrease over time (for rapid solar eclipses, or for burned–up incense, for example). Many Cabalists attempt to enchant amulets containing as much of the resonance for a given spell as possible, allowing their "magical space" to become somewhat portable.

In rules terms, the Hermetic magic of the Cabal is essentially a more detailed (and historically realistic and evocative) version of the standard *GURPS* magic system found on pp. B146–164 and in *GURPS Magic*. The same basic mechanics govern spellcasting, but Hermetic magicians, who know the true nature of the universe, can alter their chances by using correspondences linking the decans to the spell. These correspondences modify the spell caster's skill by drawing on the energies of the decans, signs, and planets to smooth the path of the magic.

3.2 Astrological Modifiers

Although the energetic matrices of the 36 decans undergird all magic, the stars and planets have an enormous influence on the decanic energy flows. Just as the moon and sun shift the earth's tides and magnetic fields, the seven mystical planets and (to a lesser extent) the constellations of the zodiac shape, amplify, mask, or alter the magical energies of the

Realms. Thus, the presence of certain materials or symbols in an area, or their use by the spellcaster, can artificially enhance a given planet or astrological sign's influence over the spell.

For a given spell, derive its correct zodiacal sign and planet from its decan. (Each *GURPS Magic* college has a source decan; see the *Decan Reference Table* on p. 00.) Look up the correspondences for that decan's sign and planet on the tables below. For every *two* zodiacal correspondences in the spell's area of effect, or involved in the spell by the caster (in the GM's judgement), add +1 to the caster's effective skill level. Similarly, add another +1 for every *three* planetary correspondences. Each sign and every planet (except Mercury) has a sign or planet in opposition. The influences of opposing planets and signs work against the spell; every *two* zodiacal or *three* planetary correspondences in opposition to those powering the spell gives –1 from the caster's effective skill level. Enormous quantities or particularly high qualities of a given corresponding (or opposing) material might grant a further +1 bonus (or –1 penalty), at GM discretion. The total bonuses available from astrological modifiers (not counting those for the day and month, if used; see sidebar, p. 00) can never exceed +3; the excess symbolic energy simply overflows the spell and bleeds back into the decanic field.

It's important to note that these energies are symbolically important to the universe. This implies that they must be symbolically important to the spell for it to work; metaphorically, the spell has to be dialing the decan's number. A GM is more than justified in ruling that a mage casting a Missile Shield spell (powered by Ro 1 d, the decan of Protection and Warning, associated with Leo) derives no special bonus simply because the caster has a heart and there is a bowl of apples in the room. On the other hand, if the caster picks up a yellow apple from the bowl and smashes it into his own chest (over the heart) while casting the spell, that might be worth the bonus. If the caster just happens to also wear a gold—and—carnelian lion amulet over his heart, or be burning a frankincense joss stick in the furnace and inhaling the fumes, that's more symbolic oomph for Leo, and hence for Ro 1 d. Many Cabalists carry such amulets around on their person; many others prefer to cast any important magic in their workshop where such arcane ingredients might be closer to hand.

If, through the ineffable mysteries of the decanic vibrations (or the impenetrable murkiness of occult research), contradictions arise, correspondences with a decan trump zodiacal correspondences, which themselves supersede planetary ones. Thus, a yellow gem can be used to concentrate the energies of Akton, decan of decay (corresponding to the Moon) rather than representing the opposing influence of the Sun. To avoid arguments, the GM should consider describing Akton's gem as "sickly bilious yellow" and any solar-enhancing gems as "rich and vibrantly golden." Magic, like the devil, is in the details.

3.2.0.1 Zodiacal Sign Correspondences

Sign (Dates) Color Metal Stone Plant Creature Scent Body Part Tool Opposing Sign

Aries Red Iron Amber Willow, bamboo, lily Ram, owl Dragonsblood Brain Horn Libra

(Mar. 21–Apr. 19)

Taurus Brown Bronze Bloodstone Chestnut Bull Storax Neck, head Lever Scorpio

(Apr. 20–May 20)

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Gemini Orange Copper Agate Holly, lotus Magpie, mule Wormwood Chest, ribs Tripod Sagittarius

(May 21–Jun. 21)

Cancer Gray Silver Moonstone Hazel Crab, crawfish, sphinx Balm Stomach Wheel Capricorn

(Jun. 22–Jul. 22)

Leo Yellow Gold Carnelian Apple, citrus trees, palms, sunflowers Lion Frankincense Heart, back Furnace Aquarius

(Jul. 23–Aug. 22)

Virgo Indigo Aluminum Sapphire Grapevine, snowdrop Dove Narcissus Bowels Lamp Pisces

(Aug. 23–Sep. 22)

Libra Pink Brass Chrysolite Ivy Elephant Galbanum Kidneys, hips Scales Aries

(Sep. 23–Oct. 23)

Scorpio Maroon Tungsten Topaz Elder, cactus Scorpion Ammonia Genitals Whip Taurus

(Oct. 24–Nov. 22)

Sagittarius Blue Platinum Zircon Yew, rushes Centaur, horse Aloe Arms, hands, liver Arrow Gemini

(Nov. 23–Dec. 21)

Capricorn Dark green Cobalt Garnet Rowan, thistle Goat Cannabis Magnet Lungs Cancer

(Dec. 22–Jan. 19)

Aquarius Purple Uranium Amethyst Ash, olive Peacock Ozone Wire Legs Leo

(Jan. 20–Feb. 19)

Pisces Crimson Steel Aquamarine Alder, dogwood Fish Ambergris Feet, lymph nodes Cross Virgo

(Feb. 20–Mar. 20)

3.2.0.2 Planetary Correspondences

Planet (Day) Color Metal Stone Plant Creature Scent Tool Opposing Planet

Sun Gold, bright yellow Gold Diamond Acacia, saffron, birch Lion Laurel Orb Moon

(Sunday)

Moon White Silver Pearl Mushroom, poppy Cat Jasmine, opium Mirror Sun

(Monday)

Mercury Orange Mercury Opal Lavender, mandrake Jackal, snake Sandalwood Pentacle None

(Wednesday)

Venus Green Copper Emerald Rose, lotus, cherry Swan, lynx Rose Chalice Mars

(Friday)

Mars Red Iron Ruby Garlic, gentian, ironwood Wolf Blood, tobacco, gunpowder Sword, athame Venus

(Tuesday)

Jupiter Blue Tin Jade Oak, mint Eagle Cedar, nutmeg Wand, scepter Saturn

(Thursday)

Saturn Black Lead Onyx Cypress, ebony Crow, raven Myrrh Sickle Jupiter

(Saturday)

3.3 The 36 Decans

The word "decan" originally comes from the Greek word *dekanos*, meaning "ruler of ten." The decans were the "rulers" of ten-degree segments of the sky, each one-third of an entire zodiacal sign: 12 signs times 30 degrees each equals the whole 360 degree zodiac. Lists and diagrams of the decans appear on the insides of Egyptian coffin lids, where they served to guide the dead to the afterlife. The great insight of decanic (and thus Hermetic) magic, that the decans govern this world and lead to another, can be seen in those inscriptions. The earliest decan list archaeologists have found comes from the 9th Dynasty, around 100 years after Khaibitu-na-Khonsu founded the Cabal. The Greek magi in Alexandria further codified and studied the decans, applying the theories of correspondences that made actual Hermetic experimentation possible. From Alexandria, the decans entered Arabic sorcerous lore, primarily in an early medieval text entitled the *Picatrix*, after the pseudonym of its author. (Despite centuries of investigation, the Cabal has no idea who "Picatrix" was; his writings hint that he was Atlantean.) The *Picatrix* served as the hidden blueprint for the works of Agrippa, Ficino, and the other Renaissance magi, and firmly embedded the decans in European astrology.

The Cabal has worked very hard to promote other astrological systems and mire decanic theory in obscurity, with much success. Relatively few specialists, and practically no laymen, can even name the decans, much less use them for

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"mundane" astrology. Even the names and orders of the decans have been confused — as far back as the 4th century A.D., the Hermetic compiler Hephaestion prepared a decan list that almost seems deliberately skewed from the Egyptian originals, which varied themselves from temple to temple. The Alexandrians, and "Picatrix," and then the Renaissance Cabalists, retained the core of the decanic knowledge, however — the keys to reality itself. The Cabalistic decans appear below, in alphabetical order by decan name (for an alphabetical reference by magical college, see the *Decan Table*, p. 00), in the following format:

3.3.1 Decan Name

This section discusses the nature and influences of the decan, and what portions or components of the Material (and the other Realms) with which it especially resonates. Some decans share resonances, much as some magical colleges share spells.

Aethyr: Every decan has a Lord (or Lady), a powerful spiritual entity known as an Aethyr. This section names the Aethyr and gives its traditional appearance in visions or on the Higher Planes.

College: For those decans that correspond with a *GURPS Magic* college, that college is given here.

3.3.1.1 Correspondences

The heart of Hermetic magic, correspondences tie the emanations of the decans to everything in the universe. Each substance, concept, place, or item resonates more or less strongly with its constituent decans. The most powerful such resonances create correspondences: the "symbolic logic" by which magic operates. GMs should feel free to "personalize" their cosmos (and throw players who own their own copies of the book a curve) by adding, altering, deleting, or otherwise changing these correspondences to suit their own sense of campaign feel.

Places: In these places, magic drawn from this decan may be cast at a bonus, from a +1 for simple correspondence with an otherwise normal location to +3 for particularly old or significant locales. Any and all modifications remain at the GM's discretion.

Materials: Using any of these materials, colors, patterns, substances, etc. in a magical spell-casting drawing upon this decan may increase the sorcerer's chances of success. Common or simple materials may add +1 to the spell's skill roll, rare or difficult ones +2, and legendary or particularly significant ones +3. Enormous quantities or particularly high qualities of any material may provide a further +1 bonus. Any and all modifications remain at the GM's discretion.

Zodiac: The ten degree segment of zodiacal arc subtended by the decan, along with its governing planet. Zodiacal signs and governing planets may also influence magical castings, as may their correspondences. (See the tables of *Zodiacal Correspondences*, p. 00, and *Planetary Correspondences*, p. 00, for specifics.)

3.3.2 Agchoni™n

The decan of noise, music, and hearing, Agchoni™n shares some overlap with its neighboring decan, as the air of Isrö (p. 00) vibrates to produce the lilting (or blaring) tones of Agchoni™n. Agchoni™n alone does not convey meaning, however; languages are part of the domain of Na™th (p. 00).

Aethyr: Hahahaal, Lord of Unstable Effort, most often takes the form of a large yellow swan or of a crowd of people talking in chorus.

College: Sound.

3.3.2.1 Correspondences

Places: Sonar stations, opera and concert houses (especially La Scala in Milan), wind tunnels or narrow canyons, echo chambers.

Materials: Bats' ears, dolphin blood, recording tape, seashells, theremin music, parrot feathers, glass shattered by sound, bright yellow–green.

Zodiac: Third decan of Aquarius; Venus.

3.3.3 Akhouiy

Akhouiy energizes (if that's the apt term) indolence, drift, ease, and luck, especially "dumb luck" or "fools' luck". Not stagnant like Alath, Akhouiy simply "goes with the flow". Some Orientalist mages claim that Taoist magic is really a college drawn from Akhouiy.

Aethyr: Vevaliah, Lady of Abandoned Success, appears as an attractive red–headed woman with her hair tied up in a black velvet band. She also manifests as a collie, a raven, or a large orange carp.

College: None known.

3.3.3.1 Correspondences

Places: Casinos, resort hotels, some taverns, much of Fa'rie, fountains (with coins).

Materials: Four–leaf clovers, rabbits' feet, upright horseshoes, beer, dice, stones with water–eroded holes through them, the small bone of a sheep's head, honey, deep orange.

Zodiac: First decan of Pisces; Jupiter.

3.3.4 Akton

Where the decay of Kurta 1 (p. 00) is most often the physical result of natural processes, its counterpart within Akton is the decadence of the spirit, or the self–created mutilation of soul, culture, or body. Akton instills corruption, debauchery, both the cruel and queasy joys of sin and its debilitation and ravages.

Aethyr: Naber, Lord of Illusionary Success, appears in many guises; a blonde woman in red, a man in a fur robe on his knees, a carrion crow or black crane, and a red–eyed gryphon.

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College: None known.

3.3.4.1 Correspondences

Places: Alcoholic wards, whorehouses, crack dens, certain temples in North Africa, slave markets, the edge of the Abyss.

Materials: Vomit, maggots, vitriol, cocaine, wormwood, venereal pus, pale yellow.

Zodiac: Third decan of Scorpio; Moon.

3.3.5 Alath

Alath creates satiety, comfort, rest, the steady state, boredom, stagnation, and stasis. Alath may be another crucial decan in the "damping out" of magical static or destructive energies where less compatible decans intersect.

Aethyr: Kaliel, the Lord of Rest from Strife, often appears as a fat man riding on a donkey drinking wine. Other times, Kaliel manifests as an enormous, slumbering bull with the head of a man or leopard.

College: None known.

3.3.5.1 Correspondences

Places: Old age homes, cold deserts, still tarns, ghost towns.

Materials: Tortoiseshell, square and cuboid shapes, arsenic, ether, morphia or heroin, deep wine-purple.

Zodiac: Third decan of Libra; Mercury.

3.3.6 Alleborith

Some see Alleborith as the essential medium of magical transmission, others as the particulate energies of mana, still others as an abstraction for that portion of Barsafael (p. 00) and Anost r (p. 00) which mages have mapped. In base, however, it is the decan present in magic at its most pure and isolate, the "active" reflection of "passive" Kumeat 1 (p. 00).

Aethyr: Mendial, Lord of Power, most often appears as either an azure dolphin or a blue merman with a trident. In both incarnations, his eyes are golden yellow.

College: Meta.

3.3.6.1 Correspondences

Places: Magical laboratories, pentacles, Places of Power, ley intersections, mana upwellings, Atlantis.

Materials: Mandrake root, orichalcum, azoth, pyramid shapes, black cat whiskers, water from Atlantis, green moonstones, pineal glands, bright azure.

Zodiac: Third decan of Capricorn; Mercury.

3.3.7 Anatreth

While Iudal (p. 00) is transition itself, the act of crossing depends upon Anatreth, the decan of movement, evolution, progress, and speed (fast or slow). Anatreth primarily impels physical movement, but astral or spiritual movement carries much of Anatreth's impulse within it.

Aethyr: Nithaya, Lady of Swiftmess, most often manifests as a blurry image of wings, but sometimes coalesces into a winged dog, or a human figure with a future and past image "ghosted" onto it.

College: Movement.

3.3.7.1 Correspondences

Places: Tornadoes, airports, speedways or freeways, lightning strikes, bullet-trains and their tracks.

Materials: Arrows, bullets, cobra venom, hawk or osprey feathers, methamphetamines, henbane, violet.

Zodiac: First decan of Sagittarius; Jupiter.

3.3.8 Anost r

Some mages theorize that Anost r, by definition, cannot exist, at least not as the Cabal understands it. It comprises that which cannot be done, that which cannot be known, the impossible, the unnamable, the reverse face of knowledge and skill, the void that preceded creation.

Aethyr: Yeichavah, Lord of Effort, traditionally appears as a gray, blind ape or as an enigmatic figure garbed in prismatic robes, its face hidden by a peacock's fan. Yeichavah appears in many other forms at whim; many mages remain uncertain that they have actually conversed with (or even summoned) him.

College: None known.

3.3.8.1 Correspondences

Places: Some peculiar rings of stone in New England, an isolated atoll in the Pacific, a mirage city in the Arabian desert, a hot spring beneath Antarctica.

Materials: The noise of a cat's passage, books never written, blood from a stone, imperceptible colors.

Zodiac: Second decan of Capricorn; Venus.

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3.3.9 ArTMtosael

This decan drives the cyclic process of creation and destruction in all its facets, from assembling pieces of knowledge to destroying a city in an atomic blast. ArTMtosael most strongly irrupts during the intermediate stages, when enough components have appeared to make the result apparent, or when the structure will fall with just one good shove.

Aethyr: Nithael, the Lord of Perfected Work, embodies and rules ArTMtosael. He often appears as either a pale, red-headed man in a reddish-purple gown carrying a wooden staff, or as a winged man with a mirrored sword and helmet. He usually wears a golden ouroborous bracelet.

College: Making and Breaking.

3.3.9.1 Correspondences

Places: Decisive battlefields, nuclear accelerators, chemical or alchemical laboratories, blacksmith shops, beehives, new forests, the Sargasso Sea.

Materials: Rams' horn (and anything else in a Fibonacci spiral), flint, clay, radioactives, E above high C, hammers, sage, murex dye or anything else reddish-purple.

Zodiac: Third decan of Aries; Jupiter.

3.3.10 Atrax

Where Ro 1 d (p. 00) protects the body, Atrax nourishes it. This decan is the day-to-day inner strength of things renewed by sunlight (for plants), food (for animals), or worship (for deities). Atrax shades into health and healing, though more as a steady state than a dramatic process, and also, naturally, into decay (food, of course, for bacteria and worms).

Aethyr: Akiah, Lady of Prudence, usually appears in traditional guise as a woman bearing an armload of fruit, grain, or bread.

College: Food.

3.3.10.1 Correspondences

Places: Supermarkets or bazaars, farmland, compost heaps, restaurants, gas stations, granaries, some fields in Sicily and Egypt.

Materials: Bread, salt, woman's hair, storax, saliva, fertilizer, peridots, light yellowish-tan.

Zodiac: First decan of Virgo; Mercury.

3.3.11 Axi™ph th

This decan may serve as another powerful "anchor" for reality. Axi™ph th empowers gravity, weight and mass, and forces holding things in place, often including oppression for its own sake.

Aethyr: Amael, Lady of Oppression, appears as a woman in an indigo robe seated on the rocks. Occasionally she weeps, just as often she has her foot on a man's throat and her hand wrapped in his hair.

College: None known.

3.3.11.1 Correspondences

Places: Underneath tons of rock, sun-baked desert flats, labor camps, prisons, certain mountains in the Pamirs.

Materials: Lead chains, iron weights, ballast from a ship that has traveled around the world, depleted uranium, indigo.

Zodiac: Third decan of Sagittarius; Sun.

3.3.12 Barsafael

This decan is the hidden truth, the subconscious mind, primal unconfessed emotions and unknown strengths. Some mages theorize that Barsafael underlies all the other decans, while others believe that as the Cabal explores more of the Realms, Barsafael's essence shrinks (or, possibly, continues to create more unknown territories).

Aethyr: Hechashiah, Lady of Ancient Strength, rules Barsafael. She appears as a woman in crimson and white robes with one leg uncovered, or as a crimson and white sea serpent.

College: None known.

3.3.12.1 Correspondences

Places: Deep beneath the ocean or in hidden caves, cities unknown to mankind, dinosaur burial grounds, fragmentary worlds long forgotten, very old mountaintops in the Appalachians and limestone sinkholes in upper Quebec.

Materials: Ambergris, petroleum, white noise, artesian water, taproots of plants, "U" shapes, crimson.

Zodiac: Second decan of Aries; Sun.

3.3.13 Belbel

The decan of pain and torment, of sharpness and shadow, of shock and loss: few mages explore these many aspects of Belbel. Many of the ghostly undead (especially shades and shadows) derive their essence from the emanations of this decan.

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Aethyr: Aaneval, Lord of Despair and Cruelty, embodies this decan. Occasionally, he appears as a man with the head of a raptor bird; other times, as a black dog; still others as a man covered in fish or snake scales.

College: None known.

3.3.13.1 Correspondences

Places: Torture chambers, death camps, deep in the rainforests where sunlight never falls, widows' walks, the shadow–burns in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the edges of the Abyss.

Materials: Funeral crepe, surgical steel, rust, ammonia, neurotoxins, dried blood, nettles, purple so dark that it appears black.

Zodiac: Second decan of Gemini; Venus.

3.3.14 Bianakith

If man is the measure of all things, Bianakith is the template to which that measure is drawn. Although humanity, as the primary intermediary between microcosm and macrocosm, encompasses (at least potentially) all the decans, it is within the medium of meat and bone and desire and thought established by this decan that they must operate.

Aethyr: Mihal, Lord of Perfected Success, appears only in human form. Sometimes, in fact, in two human forms (man and maiden); other times as a crowned king of perfect form, mien, and carriage.

College: Body Control.

3.3.14.1 Correspondences

Places: Crowded cities, human–scale statuary, portrait galleries, gymnasia.

Materials: Lungwort, liverwort, elm, river clay, human blood or skin, starfish, GI Joe or Barbie doll or any other idealized poppet, ivory.

Zodiac: Third decan of Pisces; Mars.

3.3.15 Buldum ch

This decan energizes wealth and treasure, from giving gold its glitter to building stock–market castles in the air. Within Buldum ch's penumbra lie concepts as arcane as currency arbitrage and as basic as greed.

Aethyr: Murmux, Lord of Wealth, traditionally manifests as an old man leaning on a staff, wrapped in a woolen mantle.

College: None known.

3.3.15.1 Correspondences

Places: Banks, stock market floors, gold mines, customs–houses, money changers, jewelers, treasure troves.

Materials: Money, anything expensive and hoarded, jackdaw or magpie feathers, cowrie shells, sapphires, toad–venom, gold.

Zodiac: Third decan of Virgo; Venus.

3.3.16 Charchnoumis

This decan imbues all animal life, bestial thoughts, predation, pack behavior, and such instincts. As a result, Charchnoumis is a very powerful component of human beings, and provides mana for the majority of lycanthropes and other animalistic shapeshifters.

Aethyr: Rohael, Lord of Abundance, appears most often as a great bear, but sometimes as a composite beast such as a chimera or gryphon. When he appears as a human (whether as a camel–driver or a beautiful woman in green), he usually has a blue head.

College: Animal.

3.3.16.1 Correspondences

Places: Zoos, slaughterhouses, nature preserves, forests, fresh animal tracks or kills, watering holes, Mount Ararat.

Materials: Fresh animals' blood or skin, bloodstones, fresh game spoor, hunters' weapons, civet–musk, hunting horn music, anything dark blood–red.

Zodiac: Second decan of Cancer; Mars.

3.3.17 Eneuth

Fire, the untamed element; man's first mystery. As the elemental decan of fire, Eneuth sparks not just the fires of stars and gas–grills but the lively fires of inspiration and lust, of war and demagoguery.

Aethyr: Yirthiel, Lord of Great Strength, most often appears as a golden man or as a three–headed dragon. He occasionally leads yellow–orange or red cattle.

College: Elemental Fire.

3.3.17.1 Correspondences

Places: Bonfires, firestorms, tropical or subtropical deserts at midday, war–torn lands to the south, lava flows, magmatic caverns, the Plane of Fire.

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Materials: Obsidian, asbestos, sulfur, brimstone, fire opals, sodium and magnesium, rocket fuel, ash–wood wands, cones, olibanum, garlic, mustard, cayenne pepper, orange–yellow.

Zodiac: Second decan of Sagittarius; Mars.

3.3.18 Harpax

This decan sends sap through mighty cedars and spangles the ponds with algae. All things green and growing, both harmful and healing, have their taproots somewhere in the decan of Harpax.

Aethyr: Vishiriyah, Lady of Harmonious Change, primarily speaks out of wooden musical instruments, but when she manifests, it is usually as a white dryad clad entirely in blue, red, and yellow flowers.

College: Plant.

3.3.18.1 Correspondences

Places: Sacred groves, rainforests, algal pools, weed–ridden croplands, hedge mazes.

Materials: Green jade, holly, cedar, woodwind music, amanita mushrooms, ivy, coral, forest green.

Zodiac: First decan of Capricorn; Saturn.

3.3.19 Hephesimereth

This decan is nothing, quite literally. It imbues creation with defeat, emptiness, and loss. Particularly pessimistic mages believe that eventually every decan will wind up in the sack of Hephesimereth.

Aethyr: Aniel, Lord of Defeat, walks with his head down and his dark red, shapeless, hooded robe over him. Only his hands emerge from the drapery, holding an empty sack.

College: None known.

3.3.19.1 Correspondences

Places: Open abandoned pits, former cemeteries with the bodies disinterred, Antarctic frozen desert, the intergalactic vacuum, places where the ground has been sown with salt.

Materials: Dead batteries, dust from an abandoned house, ashes, mistletoe, no color.

Zodiac: First decan of Aquarius; Saturn.

3.3.20 Ieropa I

Second of the elemental decans, Ieropa I helps solidly anchor reality as the embodiment and empowerment of earth, soil, rock, of the very concept of physicality itself.

Aethyr: Hazael, Lord of Material Gain, traditionally appears as a large man holding a jar of oil. Other common guises include a black centaur and a skin-clad tribesman.

College: Elemental Earth.

3.3.20.1 Correspondences

Places: Mountain caves, volcanoes, upthrust crags, gravel beds and quarries, city parks, fertile land in the north, the Plane of Earth.

Materials: Quartz, talc, slate, oak, lichen, worms, narcissus, orbs, dark brown.

Zodiac: Second decan of Virgo; Saturn.

3.3.21 Isrö

Air, at peace and in storms, coheres from the energies of Isrö. Not only zephyrs and hurricanes, but also the "lightning strike" of genius, the "airy chatter" of gossips, and the "windy oratory" of politicians derive from it.

Aethyr: Rehael, Lord of Science, traditionally appears as a milk-white, winged horse or as a proud king with a long white beard wearing a white robe. Very occasionally he has manifested as a proud man in a white lab coat holding a lightning bolt.

College: Elemental Air.

3.3.21.1 Correspondences

Places: Windstorms, steppes, inside or atop clouds, on balloons or airships, cities atop plateaus in the east, the Plane of Air.

Materials: Eagle feathers, chalcedony, galbanum, white orchids, helium, bird-bone knives, aspen, pink-white.

Zodiac: Second decan of Aquarius; Jupiter.

3.3.22 Iudal

Boundaries, roads, portals, rivers, bridges, and other liminal and transitional thoughts and things form from the energies of Iudal. Iudal also emerges in concepts of time, distance, and measurement, and powers bridge-trolls.

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Aethyr: Ieilael, Lord of Eventuality, holds a key in every form, while habitually shifting between them. Three common ones are that of a long-haired man with ox's hooves, a winged man, or a gryphon.

College: Gate.

3.3.22.1 Correspondences

Places: Bridges, crossroads, doorways (especially post-and-lintel ones), boundary markers, rivers, interdimensional gates, outdoors during an eclipse, grandfather clocks.

Materials: Keys, two-headed coins, juniper, alexandrites, tobacco, hollow bones, chalk, mirrors, rose-madder, cesium, cornmeal, amber.

Zodiac: Second decan of Taurus; Mercury.

3.3.23 Kumeat I

Kumeat I empowers hidden contention and unknown victory, the ace up a sleeve or the corps held in reserve, as well as secrets (especially decisive ones), murmurs, and even some aspects of codes, glyphs, and runes. Where Barsafael (p. 00) is the Unknown, Kumeat I is the Hidden, the Occult, and thus may be seen to partially embody magic itself.

Aethyr: Elemiah, Lord of Victory, appears in a (literally) legendary number of forms, most characteristically as a stranger in a blue cloak and slouch hat or as a bearded knight of cruel countenance in unreadable heraldry. In neither version are his eyes clearly visible.

College: Enchantment.

3.3.23.1 Correspondences

Places: Secret laboratories or military bases, hidden rooms or passages, labyrinths, lost cities, conspiratorial fastnesses, pocket dimensions, certain University libraries.

Materials: Artifacts with secrets, the number 13, walnuts, handcuffs, Christmas wrapping ribbon, silk cord, knots with hidden ends, rose (both the flower and the color).

Zodiac: Second decan of Leo; Jupiter.

3.3.24 Kurta I

Death and fear, decay and disease, all fluoresce with the black energies of Kurta I. Vampires, mummies, liches, and many other undead creatures draw upon the power of this decan for their vitality on the material plane, even if they must take its energies admixed with blood or magic or tana leaves to survive.

Aethyr: Menqal, Lord of Ruin, appears as a corpse in chainmail, as a black horse, or as a harlequin figure without arms,

among his many forms. He seldom appears as a skeletal figure in a black cowl and cloak.

College: Necromancy.

3.3.24.1 Correspondences

Places: Graveyards, terminal wards of hospitals, ruined buildings where people have died, plague pits, tombs, marshes, necromantic altars in Haiti, Transylvania, and elsewhere.

Materials: Rowan, cypress, myrrh, contaminated syringes, rats, yew, hellebore, onyx, ebony, jet, pitch, anything else black.

Zodiac: Third decan of Gemini; Saturn.

3.3.25 Marder™

This decan energizes rebellion against comfort, and anger at injustice — as well as violent reaction born from fear of chaos and disorder. Marder™ also drives mutations, changes born of crisis and stimulus, and the concept of the opportune disaster.

Aethyr: Hokmiah, Lord of Sorrow, appears as a man with a lion's face, occasionally enthroned but more often pacing angrily with a whip.

College: None known.

3.3.25.1 Correspondences

Places: Revolutionary battlefields or massacres, police stations, some government buildings, meteor craters, disaster sites.

Materials: Hammers, sickles, human blood, pepper, tear gas, axes, five-pointed stars (but not pentagrams), gunpowder, rhino hide, white-flecked azure.

Zodiac: Second decan of Libra; Saturn.

3.3.26 Methiax

Where Ar™_{tosael} (p. 00) assembles and disassembles matter, concepts, and energies, Methiax creates them. Or, rather, creates creation itself. Since (magically even more than mathematically) the final appearance of all matter is inherent within its smallest fragments, the impulse of creation is also the impulse of form, Methiax shapes both realities and dreams without regard for any difference that mundanity might insist exists. Some shapeshifters and phantasms draw mana from this decan.

Aethyr: Chabuiyah, Lady of Love, rules Methiax most often as a white centaur garlanded with leaves, though

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occasionally she appears as a crowned, maidenly Muse.

College: Illusion and Creation.

3.3.26.1 Correspondences

Places: Artist's studios, movie theaters and movie sets, counterfeiter's dens, certain very old vineyards in Greece and Turkey, hallucinations and hallucinogenic spaces, induced dream states, Fa'rie, copy centers and scriptoria.

Materials: Pyrites, zircons, flashbulbs, eggs, pomegranate seeds, fractals, holograms, hallucinogens, fog or anything else gray.

Zodiac: First decan of Cancer; Moon.

3.3.27 NaTMth

What Iudal (p. 00) is to the material experience, NaTMth is to the conceptual one — the creator and sustainer of communication, language, imagery, symbolism, and teaching. Not only the media of communication but the urge to communicate arise from NaTMth, which connects everything on many levels.

Aethyr: Mebahel, Lady of Peace Restored, appears as a woman reading a book, occasionally bearing a bloody spear.

College: Communication and Empathy.

3.3.27.1 Correspondences

Places: Radio stations, printers, shared telepathic experiences, shared or archetypal dream states, universities, a few select bars, certain bookshops in London and Paris.

Materials: Vervain, bay leaves, "V" shapes, stringed instruments or their strings, blue–gray.

Zodiac: First decan of Libra; Venus.

3.3.28 Nefthada

This decan impels pleasure and delight, enabling thrills physical and mental. Often Nefthada is only perceptible at single, almost painfully perfect moments: the meadow under a rainbow, the first bite of steak, the second swallow of cognac — but its influence is in all those things forever.

Aethyr: Nelokiel, Lord of Pleasure, traditionally takes on the guise of a well–formed man on a richly–caparisoned camel or in a luxurious tent.

College: None known.

3.3.28.1 Correspondences

Places: Almost nowhere, save for perfect moments in time or space; some English and Japanese gardens achieve correspondence with Nefthada on a continuing basis, as do a very few building interiors.

Materials: Champagne, star sapphires, morning dew, bright green.

Zodiac: Second decan of Scorpio; Jupiter.

3.3.29 Ouare

This decan governs constructs, machines, alloys, and vehicles. Although Ouare's college was one of the most recently codified (by the Heronians in the 2nd century A.D.), it is coeval with all the other decans, as far as the Cabal can determine. Some animate golems, cyborgs, and revenants take mana from this decan.

Aethyr: Heroch, Lord of Success Unfulfilled, usually embodies this decan as a bronze clockwork lion, a mermaid (most often as the figurehead on a warship), a swarthy man with metal-and-ivory teeth, or a chariot-driver with serpents for legs.

College: Technology.

3.3.29.1 Correspondences

Places: Garages, metallurgical laboratories, inside moving vehicles, virtual-reality matrices, the Autobahn.

Materials: Gears and clockwork, plastic, microchips, brass, aluminum, olive-green or any artificial dye such as aniline.

Zodiac: Third decan of Taurus; Saturn.

3.3.30 Phoub I

This decan would seem to embody the Manichaeian contradiction, that light cannot exist without darkness to define it. Phoub I deals equally with both, and thus also with vision, blindness, and irreconcilable conflict.

Aethyr: Yelayel, Lord of Strife, appears alternately clad in noble splendor on the back of a lion or caparisoned in rags riding a gray horse.

College: Light and Darkness.

3.3.30.1 Correspondences

Places: Tropical beaches, outdoors at sunrise or sunset, tanning salons, cathedrals, stone circles, fireworks shows.

Materials: Heliotropes and other tropical flowers, flashlights, cinnamon, "X" or cross shapes, laurel and hazelwood,

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black-and-white (or black-and-red) checkerboard patterns.

Zodiac: First decan of Leo; Sun.

3.3.31 Phthenoth

Impelling cleansing, restoration, and healing both physical and metaphorical, Phthenoth brings about the renaissance of body and spirit throughout reality. Repair of machines, of course, is the province of Ouare (p. 00), although areas of overlap may exist for some golems and homunculi.

Aethyr: Shaliah, Lady of Material Happiness, may appear in many guises, but is almost always seen as a young, noble woman regardless of garb or impedimenta (which only very occasionally include the caduceus).

College: Healing.

3.3.31.1 Correspondences

Places: Hospitals, the island of Cos, spring meadows after a rain, arches, Avalon.

Materials: Balm, pure water, apples, watered wine, chicken soup, potash, Greek ("+") crosses, lavender.

Zodiac: Second decan of Pisces; Moon.

3.3.32 Ro I d

This decan imbues walls with their strength, thorns with their sharpness, shields with their glancing curves, antibiotics with their efficacy. Along with defense and guardianship, Ro I d drives alertness, preparation, wisdom of experience, and that "sixth sense" that tells you you're being watched. Many wraiths, and some trolls, derive their mana from this decan.

Aethyr: Mahashiah, Lord of Valor, appears as a muscular, dark-feathered warrior holding a shield (often with a rattlesnake on it) and stabbing spear, or occasionally as a knight in armor or a watchman with a whip.

College: Protection and Warning.

3.3.32.1 Correspondences

Places: Anywhere under surveillance or electric-eye grid, castles and fortresses, missile silos and radar stations, firebreaks, guardposts.

Materials: Owl or raven feathers, oxhide, "M" shapes, dragon's blood, unicorn horn, sirens, tiger-lilies, Kevlar, chain links, bronze (both the metal and the color).

Zodiac: Third decan of Leo; Mars.

3.3.33 Ruax

This decan creates strength of will, connects perceptions to the mind, and governs sanity, drunkenness, the hotter emotions, sleep, and the material phenomena of dreams (although their content may fall within another decan).

Aethyr: Deneyal, Lady of Dominion, rules Ruax. She usually appears either as a dark, physically-imposing giantess or queen clad in a white robe. Either form possesses fiery red eyes. Deneyal also occasionally appears as a songbird or a cat.

College: Mind Control.

3.3.33.1 Correspondences

Places: Television studios or showrooms, hypnosis clinics or performances, drug parlors and opium dens, asylums, personal dreamscapes, memory palaces, and certain lamaseries in Central Asia.

Materials: Cathode-ray tubes, spirals, poppies, downward-pointing arrows, cerulean blue.

Zodiac: First decan of Aries; Mars.

3.3.34 Sahu

The decan of the giants, Sahu impregnates concepts and activities such as archery, hunting, and herding as well as their physical associations such as mountains, forests, grasslands and other wild spaces. For some reason, this decan also manifests in high stone walls; possibly as an analogy to mountains.

Aethyr: Orvandal, Lord of Material Trouble, appears as a giant, naked save for a belt and bow. His color ranges from blood-red to forest-green to basaltic black.

College: None known.

3.3.34.1 Correspondences

Places: Mountainsides, the walls of Mycenae and Machu Picchu, the Kenyan high veldt, imposing statues or stone structures such as Mount Rushmore or the Sphinx and Pyramids of Giza.

Materials: Basalt, sequoia wood, subsonics, arrowheads, sinew, fresh animal blood, opals and anything else red and black.

Zodiac: First decan of Taurus; Venus.

3.3.35 Saphathoraél

This decan covers not only physical water (and more generally liquids), but conceptual water as well; that which "flows easily" or "is hard to pin down." Like the other elemental decans, it likely plays a key role both underpinning physical

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reality and in blending conceptual reality so that humans can perceive it without massive dissonance.

Aethyr: Muumiah, Lord of Blended Pleasure, appears most often not as some great marine creature but as a sailor with two dogs (one green and one blue). Occasionally he holds a serpent (or a stream of water) in one hand.

College: Elemental Water.

3.3.35.1 Correspondences

Places: Oceans, lakes, ships, reservoirs, wells and oases, ice rinks, sewers, islands to the west, the Plane of Water, the Pearl–Bright Ocean.

Materials: Fish, the blood of drowned men, aquamarines and beryls, pearls, teardrop shapes, chalices, lotuses, ferns, kelp, Irish whiskey, the color blue.

Zodiac: Third decan of Cancer; Venus.

3.3.36 Sphand™r

This decan manifests both as the sensorium and as the intellect, perhaps best understood as the passive counterpart to Ruax' (p. 00) mental processes. In addition to things sensed and things thought (including arts and humanities), Sphand™r permits intuition and divination.

Aethyr: Umibael, the Lady of Shortened Force, appears as a snake, a wolf with a snake's tail, a woman leading a roan mare and stallion, or a man with a surveyor's rod.

College: Knowledge.

3.3.36.1 Correspondences

Places: Computer rooms, hexagonal spaces, paintings or images of eyes, theatrical stages (especially the Globe), libraries (especially Alexandria).

Materials: Agates and cat's eyes, musk, hexagons, fennel, ringing bells, russet–red.

Zodiac: First decan of Gemini; Mercury.

3.3.37 Tepsisem

Much as Phoub 1 (p. 00) immanentizes both light and darkness, Tepsisem gives rise to beauty and to its loss, and thus to transience and impermanence; steady diminution rather than the catastrophes of Marder™.

Aethyr: Livoyah, Lady of Loss, appears as a middle–aged woman in red, a scarlet fire–sprite, or a swift horsewoman on a red horse.

College: None known.

3.3.37.1 Correspondences

Places: Museums, art auction houses, badly-maintained (but once attractive) buildings, eroding statues.

Materials: Works of art, rouge, acid rain, faded photographs, broken mirrors, velvet, sandalwood, cut hibiscus or lilies, scarlet.

Zodiac: First decan of Scorpio; Mars.

3.4 Decanate Reference Table

Decan College Zodiacal Position Planet Sephirah Page

Charchnoumis Animal Cancer 2nd Mars Binah 00

Bianakith Body Control Pisces 3rd Mars Malkuth 00

Na™th Communication and Empathy Libra 1st Venus Chokmah 00

Isrö Elemental Air Aquarius 2nd Jupiter Tiphareth 00

Ieropa 1 Elemental Earth Virgo 2nd Saturn 00

Eneuth Elemental Fire Sagittarius 2nd Mars Yesod 00

Saphathoraél Elemental Water Cancer 3rd Venus Chesed 00

Kumeat 1 Enchantment Leo 2nd Jupiter Tiphareth 00

Atrax Food Virgo 1st Mercury 00

Iudal Gate Taurus 2nd Mercury 00

Phthenoth Healing Pisces 2nd Moon Yesod 00

Methiax Illusion and Creation Cancer 1st Moon Chokmah 00

Sphand™r Knowledge Gemini 1st Mercury Hod 00

Phoub 1 Light and Darkness Leo 1st Sun Geburah 00

Ar™tosael Making and Breaking Aries 3rd Jupiter Chesed 00

3.3.37 Tepsisem

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Alleborith Meta Capricorn 3rd Mercury Chesed 00

Ruax Mind Control Aries 1st Mars Chokmah 00

Anatreth Movement Sagittarius 1st Jupiter Hod 00

Kurta 1 Necromancy Gemini 3rd Saturn Malkuth 00

Harpax Plant Capricorn 1st Saturn Chokmah 00

Ro 1 d Protection and Warning Leo 3rd Mars Netzach 00

Agchoni™n Sound Aquarius 3rd Venus Netzach 00

Ouare Technology Taurus 3rd Saturn 00

Akhouiy none known Pisces 1st Jupiter Hod 00

Akton none known Scorpio 3rd Moon Netzach 00

Alath none known Libra 3rd Mercury Chesed 00

Anost r none known Capricorn 2nd Venus Binah 00

Axi™ph th none known Sagittarius 3rd Sun Malkuth 00

Barsafael none known Aries 2nd Sun Binah 00

Belbel none known Gemini 2nd Venus Yesod 00

Buldum ch none known Virgo 3rd Venus 00

Hephesimereth none known Aquarius 1st Saturn Geburah 00

Marder™ none known Libra 2nd Saturn Binah 00

Nefthada none known Scorpio 2nd Jupiter Tiphareth 00

Sahu none known Taurus 1st Venus Geburah 00

Tepsisem none known Scorpio 1st Mars Geburah 00

3.5 The Laws of Sympathy

The theories of correspondences, which allow Hermetic magi to manipulate the decans (and lesser astrological fields), elaborate on a basic magical principle: "Like affects like." The intellectual breakthrough of Hermetism was the discovery that certain seemingly unconnected materials resonated, or vibrated, *in sympathy with* the fundamental energies of the universe, to a degree that could be known, measured, and controlled. However, without truly understanding the nature or interrelationships of those energies, magicians can still utilize them, just as the Romans built massive aqueducts without knowing the first principles of accurate physics. The magical equivalents of the Romans' levers and pulleys are the Laws of Sympathy.

Spellcasters who know them (which includes many characters with Occultism or Anthropology) and use them can gain bonuses to their skill with a given spell or ritual. However, because they are basically "brute force" methods, the *total* of bonuses gained from the Laws of Sympathy can never exceed +6. Also, use only the strongest present modifier under each Law; if you have the blood of your subject, also using the hair and nails and favorite T-shirt won't add any additional juice to the spell. Note, also, that these bonuses apply *in addition to* existing bonuses and penalties in the **GURPS** magic system. (This is why magicians casting spells on themselves get no Contagion or Similarity bonuses, for example.) Spells cast at a distance may become possible using the Laws of Sympathy, but the -5 modifiers for "cannot see or touch subject" and any distance penalties should be added. (Magi using the Laws of Sympathy use the Long-Distance Modifiers from p. B151 for spells not traditionally usable at long distance.) The descriptions of some spells such as Seeker (p. B163) or Malefice (p. G39) incorporate ad hoc versions of the Laws of Sympathy; for consistency, the GM should apply the rules here rather than in those descriptions.

3.5.1 The Law of Contagion

Things once connected are always connected. This principle is the first, and simplest, principle of correspondences to grasp. To harm an enemy, burn a piece of his hair or fingernails. To gain a maiden's love, steal her scarf and sleep on it. Such folk magic uses the Law of Contagion in its most basic form; Hermetic and other advanced magical theories still use it today. Its power causes many paranoid magi to save and burn their own hair, fingernail clippings, excreta, and so forth. Magi almost never give blood.

In game terms, possessing a contagious link to a spell's subject grants a bonus to spellcasting. Using an article of clothing or a personal item with a strong link to the subject in the spell grants a +1 to skill. This should be something the subject would actually miss; one dress shoe out of ten pair in the closet, or a pencil from the subject's desk, will have no effect, while a well-worn pair of underwear or a "lucky pocketknife" would grant the bonus. (At the GM's discretion, clothing or items of vast personal importance such as grave earth or wedding clothes, or a magician's robe or staff, could grant a higher bonus still.) A skin scraping, saliva, fingernail clippings, hair or fur of the subject grants a +2 bonus, as does a physical piece of an inanimate subject, such as wood from a subject house's lintel. The blood or semen or corpse of the subject (or the equivalent, such as the motor oil from a subject vehicle) gives a +3 to skill. Casting the spell using the subject's *physically present*, willing or fully subdued child or spouse will also grant a +3 to skill.

3.5.2 The Law of Similarity

Things that look (or act) alike are alike. This principle can be seen at work in some of the planetary correspondences:

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gold aids solar magic because gold is the color of the sun. (To Hermetic magicians, the precise formulation of this would be that both gold and the sun comprise very similar proportions of the same decanic energies.) Its most common use is in practical magic: the shaman clutches eagle feathers to let his spirit fly, for example.

In game terms, focusing a spell through a similar object to the subject, or engaging in symbolically similar actions to the effect, makes successfully casting a spell easier. A simple sketch of the subject is essentially worthless; either an accurate drawing (with a successful Artist roll) or a model of the subject (with a Sculpting+3 skill roll; the third dimension adds enough similarity that a sculpture can be less successful and still work) is required to gain a +1 bonus. A symbolic representation of the spell's effect (a bird feather for a flight spell, a flashlight for a light spell) can also grant a +1 bonus to casting. A photograph, a voice recording, or a formal portrait or sculpture (in other words, an image made in the presence of the subject) will add a +2 bonus to skill. The GM may allow more elaborate symbolic actions to grant a +2 bonus as well; stabbing a model of the subject with a dirty hypodermic to cast a disease spell, for example. A moving picture or video of the subject will add a +3 bonus, as would a hologram. (Magical illusions of the subject interfere with the actual spell to be cast, and grant no bonus, although they may be helpful in creating images.) The subject's twin or clone, if physically present and willing (or fully subdued) would also grant a +3 bonus.

3.5.3 The Law of Names

To know a thing's name is to control it. When God gave Adam dominion over the birds and beasts of the Earth, he told him to name them. To reduce a person, place, or creature to syllables and letters is to assert control over it. Goetic magi summon demons using their True Names, and command them using the ineffable Names of God. The entire discipline of kabbalah (sidebar, p. 00) is a continuing refinement and exploration of the Law of Names. Every person, every sentient entity (and not a few others), has a True Name, the name by which the universe knows him. In modern industrial society that may, in fact, be the name by which he is commonly known — it's usually the "full legal name" on a birth certificate. A Roman Catholic, however, may be baptized or confirmed with a different name than his "birth name" — this ritual renames him, and that name becomes his True Name. Other groups have similar practices. In many tribal societies, everyone has a True Name (usually given by their mother) and a public name; some also have a "secret name" granted upon their coming-of-age. Families with long histories within the Cabal also follow this practice; Cabalistic scions always have a True Name known only to their mothers.

Upon initiation, most Cabalists take a new name. This Cabal Name can become a feared source of magical power in its own right (ask Merlin or Cagliostro), but like any public identity, one of its true purposes is to mask its user. Using such a name (or a pseudonym) will allow magic to find its subject ("Show me Cagliostro" is a legitimate — if dangerous — thing to ask of a crystal ball) but grants no bonus to spellcasting. Using a subject's full legal name (where that differs from a True Name), military serial number, or Social Security Number grants a +1 bonus to skill; private "pet" names, autographs, baptismal or other secret names (where they differ from True Names) will grant a +2 bonus. Somehow using the DNA sequence or other fully individual, almost completely unknown identifier of a subject (for example, the secret identity of a superhero) might even grant a +3 to skill. Using the subject's True Name grants a +4 bonus to skill. (At the GM's discretion, it may grant an even higher bonus, or an automatic success, with spells such as Planar Summons or Summon Demon, as well as Mind Control or other highly personal magics.)

3.5.4 A Sympathetic Synthesis: The "Voodoo Doll"

Haitian bokors actually derived the infamous "voodoo doll" relatively late, from 19th century reprints of French magical grimoires going back to the late Middle Ages. (Even today, it's only rarely used in Haiti, and is more common in outlying voodoo communities such as those in New Orleans and New York.) French medieval poppet magic (as it perhaps should be properly known) was a refinement of techniques going back to the ancient Egyptian papyri, which describe sorcerers creating wax images of victims to harm them at a distance. At any rate, it makes a familiar example of the applied Laws of Sympathy.

Dapper Parisian boulevardier and vile sorcerous back-stabber Louis de Grandin wishes to curse his rival for the fair Mireille, the bluff American soldier Jack Cadell. Made impatient and impetuous by love, he buys a GI Joe doll (the better to represent contemptible plastic American society) and sneaks a lock of Jack's hair from the barbershop. He scribbles "Jack Cadell" across the doll's chest with a marker, and gets ready to cast his spell. With a +1 for the doll (as a symbolic representation of Jack, not as an image) and +2 for the hair, Louis has a total of +3 to his skill at casting his Pain spell. Because he labeled the doll, he can cast the spell on Jack using it, but "Jack Cadell" is too unspecific to grant any bonus under the Law of Names.

If Louis takes a snapshot of Jack and pastes the photo over the doll's face, that will raise the Similarity to +2 (the image superseding the symbolism); if he bribes a record clerk to give him Jack's full name, that will add another +1 under the Law of Names. Sadly for Louis, Jack is a lapsed Catholic, and his baptismal name is his True Name. If he can somehow get ahold of Jack's blood, Louis can write that name in it for a +3 from Contagion, and try again at the maximum +6, less modifiers for distance.

3.6 Materia et Exempli

3.6.1 Alchemy

Jung believed that alchemy was a metaphor for the attempt to examine one's own life, bring it into union with the divine, and perfect the soul. The Cabal knows better than that, but its masters remain very grateful to Jung for confusing the issue so badly. Leaving aside such weighty matters as the quest for the Philosopher's Stone (p. 00), alchemists depend on their abstruse knowledge of the levels and types of decanic energies present in different materials to create powerful magical elixirs. Apply the Hermetic modifiers for decans, zodiacal signs, and governing planets to the alchemy rules presented on pp. M98–102; the GM will need to assign each elixir a governing decan (likely based on the spell granting a similar effect).

In addition, due to the precise and delicate nature of such highly material magic, an alchemist must begin and end elixir creation at precisely the right instant. Before cooking starts, the alchemist must make an Astrology roll to determine the precise stellar influences on the process; the GM should subtract the amount he fails by from the alchemist's Alchemy skill for this elixir. If the alchemist succeeds, there is no penalty, but also no additional bonus; the astrological check simply works to prevent mistakes. If the GM is using the day and month modifiers from the sidebar on p. 00, they apply to the elixir's completion date rather than its beginning date or the date it is consumed. Also, negative modifiers for day and month are tripled; alchemical elixirs are sensitive and the tiniest unfavorable shifts in their governing stars can spoil the whole batch.

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3.6.2 Magic Items

Casters may use Hermetic modifiers while enchanting an item. The applicable modifiers should be those dealing with the spell to be enchanted into the item, rather than the Enchant or Scroll spell. Penalties for inappropriate materials (using Libra–resonant brass or chrysolite in an Aries–driven Mind Control item, for example) count *triple* for enchanting items; their permanent presence will always hamper the energies' transmission. Casting a spell enchanted into a magic item can gain no further Hermetic bonuses, however; those previously–gathered energies are already reflected in the item's Power. No Hermetic bonuses aid the use of Powerstones, although the GM using the optional "resistor" rules in the sidebar on p. 00 may wish to allow such substances to prevent magic from being drawn out of Powerstones.

3.6.3 Sacred Architecture

The shape, construction, decoration, and nature of buildings acts to focus, dissipate, or channel the energies of the decans. "Sick building syndrome" exemplifies the kind of effect such energies can have — but so does Chartres Cathedral. Some occultists design buildings to use this effect, building on the Hermetic–Pythagorean harmonies of number and shape with the decanic frequencies. This discipline is called sacred architecture, or sacred geometry. The 1st–century B.C. magician–architect Vitruvius developed the principles of sacred architecture in his *Ten Books on Architecture*. Their rediscovery, along with the works of Hermes Trismegistos, helped rebuild the Cabal and trigger the Renaissance.

In game terms, to use sacred architecture, a builder must possess sufficient competence in Architecture to create the necessary designs *and* at least one spell in the college corresponding to the decan he wishes the building to affect. (The GM may wish to require at least a skill of 12 in Occultism, Thaumatology, or similar skills.) Buildings designed using sacred architecture add the amount by which the sacred architect made his Architecture skill roll to the bonus to skill for casting spells of any given decan from within *or into* them. Sacred architects may design buildings that gather the looser zodiacal energies; such designs add a +1 bonus to skill for spells corresponding to those energies for each 2 points by which the Architecture roll succeeded. A similar rule obtains for buildings to channel planetary energies, only the +1 bonus comes for every 3 points by which the architect makes his skill roll. Sacred architects may also design buildings to repel magical energies; simply replace the bonuses with penalties to skill based on the architect's degree of success.

In Chinese folk practice, the art of *feng shui* seeks to apply certain similar basic principles to architecture and even urban planning. The correspondence between *feng shui* and sacred architecture may run deeper than it appears on the surface; the efficacy and accuracy of *feng shui* remains up to the GM (but see the *What About China?* sidebar on p. 00, first).

3.6.4 An Example of Hermetic Magic

The Cabalist assassin Lisanne Self wishes to cast a Permanent Forgetfulness (p. M66) spell on the Interpol agent hounding her. She begins with a recording of the agent's voice, saved from an answering machine tape in the early stages of their duel. She obtained three of his hairs from his comb by breaking into his hotel room, but that may have been what tipped him off to her. Thanks to a bribed contact in Geneva, she knows his name is St.–John Scott Palmer; she hopes that's his True Name as well. This will allow her to use the Laws of Sympathy and, if she creates a strong enough connection, overcome the distance (around 20 miles) between her laboratory outside Philadelphia and Palmer, who's in the city investigating her.

The decan Ruax powers Mind Control spells; Lisanne considers casting the spell from a nearby insane asylum, where Ruax' energies pool and roil, but rejects the sanitarium as insufficiently well-guarded. She decides to use other foci for Ruax, and hangs cerulean blue banners emblazoned with downward-pointing arrows around her ritual space. Inside it, she plugs in a CRT showing a spiral pattern (both resonant with Ruax) and sets up an iron brazier, to focus the energies of both Aries, from whence Ruax flows, and Mars, which enhances Aries. To further enhance Mars, she wears an iron talisman engraved with its planetary sigils. In the brazier she burns owls' brains, dragonsblood, Palmer's brand of cigarettes (Silk Cut), his hair, and poppies grown on the slopes of the Tien Shan mountains by the dubious and enigmatic Brothers of Sleep. Inhaling the smoke, she plays the recording of St.-John's voice backward while writing his name on bamboo splits with the tip of her iron athame. Burning these in the brazier, she casts her spell.

The modifiers break down thus:

Decanic Modifiers: A total of +6 — +4 for the "conventional" components (cerulean blue, arrow insignia, cathode-ray tube, and spirals) and +2 for the rare and significant poppies.

Astrological Modifiers: The bamboo, dragonsblood, and owl brains all draw down the energies of Aries. Each two such correspondences grant one point of bonus; the owl brains count as a "double ingredient" since both owls and brains resonate with that zodiac sign, so Lisanne draws +2 for the total. The athame, tobacco, and amulet make three Mars-resonant components for an additional +1. (Although the iron brazier counts for both, it isn't enough to add another point to either, and the maximum bonus from astrological modifiers is +3, anyway.)

Laws of Sympathy: Palmer's hairs add +2 for Contagion, and the recording grants her a +2 for Similarity. (The symbolic action of playing it backward to represent memory loss is neat, but would only grant the same +2 for Similarity.) For his legal name (Lisanne is incorrect in her assumption) on the bamboo, she adds another +1 for the Law of Names. This grants her the maximum +5 for the Laws of Sympathy.

Her total modifier from the ritual is +14; she subtracts -5 for inability to see the subject, and a further -5 for distance (10-30 miles) for a net +4 to her skill at casting Permanent Forgetfulness.

3.6.5 Thoroughly Modern Astrology

GURPS Cabal follows the consensus of the Western mainstream astrological tradition, which as yet doesn't get too bent out of shape over the post-classical planets (Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto), the precession of the equinoxes (which has thrown all the zodiacal months off), the presence of the constellation Ophiuchus in the modern ecliptic plane, the calendrical shifts from Egyptian to Julian to Gregorian to scientific, or daylight savings time and time zones. GMs who, for whatever reason, demand a hard, scientific basis for astrological magic are free to alter Hermetic theory and practice to suit themselves — many modern astrologers do so, although commonly accepted ground rules have not yet emerged. One possibility might be to assign the post-classical planets to those decans without colleges (see below) and derive intriguing new parallelisms for them. (To the extent that a "standard" theory has emerged, Uranus seems to govern explosive or revolutionary change, Neptune deep "sea changes" and massive impersonal forces, and Pluto the metaphorical "underground" and change after death.) Another interesting conundrum concerns the astrologies of other solar systems; since no Cabalist has left this one, the question remains open.

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3.6.6 Decans without Colleges

Of the 36 decans, 13 have no known *GURPS Magic* college assigned to them. This is a happy accident, but will hopefully aid GMs in personalizing, and possibly adding mystery to, their *GURPS Cabal* campaigns. The GM may decide to create more colleges to accompany those decans, to build decan-specific spell lists for all 36 decans and ditch the college system altogether, raise the sub-colleges from *GURPS Grimoire* into full-fledged college status, or to split other existing colleges along decan-related lines. Any or all of these decisions could have major in-game repercussions, or even be the driver of a campaign. If, for example, the PCs form the Lodge that has just synthesized spells for the College of Void, tied to Anost r (or are hapless archaeologists who have discovered the ancient Saharan rituals tied to the decan of Sahu), they become a prize and a target for many other Lodges. The GM may also simply leave the 13 "empty" decans as the source of creepy and ill-defined spells for NPC magi to use, or as the mana-source for other supernatural beings.

3.6.7 Magical Lenses

The magic (if you'll excuse the term) of *GURPS* is its modularity; players and GMs can use as many, or as few, rules as they wish, to focus the game experience in any number of directions to support any number of play styles. The following *entirely optional* rules and suggestions may help GMs and players focus their *GURPS Cabal* games likewise.

3.6.7.1 Magic a la Carte

The Hermetic magic system in *GURPS Cabal* is modeled after the Golden Dawn retroactive rationalization of Renaissance magical theory, which was itself a retroactive syncretization of kabbalism, alchemical theory, Hermetic philosophy, Greek astrology, and so forth. The GM who wishes to treat Hermetic magic as a salad bar — take what you want, leave the rest — is in the best possible company, in other words. Peel back or beef up the modifier structure until you feel comfortable with the final mix; like real Hermetic magic, the system is an accretion of modular levels of influence. In general, the more different types of modifiers (decanic, sympathetic, astrological, elemental, etc.) are available to magi, the higher the potential power and flexibility level, and the greater the complexity, of magic in the game. GMs who wish to tightly restrain the use of magic, or limit the amount of time spent totting up modifiers, should either reduce the total points available from modifiers or reduce the number of correspondences that grant them. Leaving only the decanic modifiers and those for the Laws of Sympathy (p. 00) will retain the majority of Cabalistic flavor and give non-Hermetic magi (who will likely know about the Laws of Sympathy) a more level playing field. For a still more even contest, increase the maximum bonus available from the Laws of Sympathy to +10, which brings it more in line with the potential bonus from a powerfully-correspondent Hermetic spell. Unless you desire a game of incredibly powerful magicians, it's wise to cap any and all bonuses at the +15 total given on p. VO68.

3.6.7.2 The Age of Lead

Even given the Material Realm's low mana level, the sheer number and variety of Hermetic magic modifiers possible makes spellcasting easy for knowledgeable characters. For a rare-magic game, in which those Hermetic knowledges can be the only thing making magic possible at all, the GM might reduce Assiah's (or at least the Earth's) mana level to *very low mana* — all spells are cast at -10 to skill. (Any artifacts the GM wishes to remain operable should have their Power increased by 5 under this regime.) It might be interesting to make mana a dwindling resource: in the Egyptian Old Kingdom, the mana level of the Earth was merely low, but it has decreased over time. In game terms, every 500 years the

penalty to skill increases by 1 point.

A variation on this, for a cosmology that opposes technology and magic, could be that each advance in TL increases the penalty to skill by 1 point. Thus, the TL1 Egyptians felt only a small diminution in magic, but by the Middle Ages spells had to be cast at -3. The Edwardian-era Golden Dawn (p. 00) was a response to the spell modifier dropping from a Steam Age -5 to an Electrical Age -6 in England, and the most advanced parts of the West now suffer a -8 to spellcasting. Of course, in primitive TL0 areas deep in the jungles of New Guinea, the Congo, or Brazil, magic remains at full power . . .

3.6.7.3 Some Assembly Required

Another way to privilege Hermetic magicians over all the others is to require at least one (or more than one) decanic connection for magic to work at all! The GM could make this an absolute rule, or (to allow some competition) rule that any magic cast without a decanic connection is at a further -5 to success. This rule will also privilege supernatural creatures and psionics, who don't actually *cast* spells; it might be an interesting direction in mixed-character games.

More radically still, the GM could penalize magicians -5 for casting without a decanic connection, a further -5 for casting without an astrological connection (planet or zodiacal sign), and -2 each for casting without the Laws of Contagion, Similarity, or Names (p. 00). (This last, cumulative -6, modifier matches the rule on p. VO70, and the GM may wish to use it even if he chooses not to assign other penalties.) If this rule is used, ignore the "upper limit" on astrological modifiers (p. 00). Magic in games with this built-in limitation will feature a great deal of detail work, careful preparation, and mounds of specialized ingredients: in other words, it will closely resemble actual Renaissance Hermetic magical practice.

3.6.7.4 Knowledge is Power

GMs should keep in mind the rule on pp. B147-148: increased skill with a spell equates to decreased energy costs. As written, this makes Hermetic magi potentially much more powerful than "conventional" *GURPS* magi, which is, after all, the basic idea behind the Cabal. A GM who wishes a lower power level can change this rule from a bonus to a trade: the caster can either cast the spell at a higher skill level *or* at a lower energy cost. In this regime, a Cabalist with an effective skill level of 23 can choose either to pay the full cost for the spell and be very sure of casting it, or cast it at level 19 with a -1 energy cost -- or at level 14 with a -2 energy cost.

Alternately, the GM could allow a Cabalist with a very high effective skill level to trade it for "extra effect," increasing the effective limits of the spell. Five points of skill should roughly equal an additional "level" of effectiveness. In this system, a Cabalist with an modified Fireball-23 could trade five points of skill for an extra die (paying the extra energy cost) of damage, casting a 4d Fireball at skill 18 (for 3 energy points -- 4 points for 4 dice, minus one for skill), or a 5d Fireball at skill 13 (for 5 energy points). This system will tend to lower spells' level in games, while increasing their versatility. Combining both rules will retain the versatility and soak up those Hermetic modifier bonuses to skill nicely.

3.6.7.5 It's a Game, Not a Doctoral Thesis

The Hermetic magic system makes spellcasting much more complex, although it grants much more potential power. GMs may wish to reward Hermetic knowledge, but not wish to bog down the game and bother with computing modifiers

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and decans and zodiacs and whatever else. Such GMs can keep the "flavor" of the system and simply rule that the Thaumatology skill represents knowledge of Hermetic magic, and make it unavailable to PCs or NPCs who have no business knowing it. Then, for every point above 12 in Thaumatology a Hermetic caster possesses, he may add 1 to his effective skill with any spell, assuming access to a suitable variety of magical impedimenta. The GM may add additional modifiers to taste; to enhance the flavor, he may consider granting bonuses to players who use cool Hermetic terminology while their characters are casting spells. "By the puissant energies of Yithiel, Lord of Great Strength, I offer thee up to the refiner's fire of Eneuth!" or similarly purple *Dr. Strange*-influenced phraseology should be worth a couple of extra points, at least.

3.6.8 When The Stars Are Right

If the GM keeps a campaign calendar, using modifiers for the day and zodiacal month on which the spell is being cast can add another level of feel and tactical possibility to the game. Use an office desk calendar or pocket diary (or, for non-contemporary campaigns, a perpetual calendar copied from an almanac) to keep track of campaign time. (Llewellyn Press and other occult and new age publishers produce astrological calendars for GMs who wish to get even more involved and produce modifiers based on actual astrological events.)

In some parts of Yetzirah or Briah, time may seem to flow differently from time in Assiah — this is experiential time, not the True Time marked off by the cosmic wheeling of the stars and planets. The date on Earth (at the caster's physical location, or the subject's, or Greenwich, or Jerusalem, or wherever, at the discretion of the GM) at the moment of spellcasting is the date to use for deriving these modifiers. If the planetary day matches the planet corresponding to the spell's decan (see *Planetary Correspondence Table*, p. 00), the spell is at +1 to cast; if the zodiacal month matches the sign corresponding to the spell's decan (see *Zodiacal Correspondence Table*, p. 00) the spell is at +2. Conversely, if the planetary day or zodiacal month are in opposition to the correct planet or sign for the spell's powering decan, the modifier becomes -1 or -2, respectively. These modifiers are cumulative, for this end result:

Right day, right month +3

Wrong day, right month +2

Opposing day, right month +1

Right day, wrong month +1

Wrong day, wrong month +0

Opposing day, wrong month -1

Right day, opposing month -1

Wrong day, opposing month -2

Opposing day, opposing month -3

At the GM's discretion, a magician may claim a +1 bonus for magic corresponding to the zodiacal month of the mage's birth, with the corresponding –1 penalty for magic opposing the mage's birth–month. A mage born under the sign of Virgo, for example, would get a +1 bonus on spells drawn from the decans of Atropax, Buldumech, or Ieropa 1, and a –1 penalty on Piscean spells, those powered by Akhouiy, Bianakith, or Phthenoth.

3.6.9 Other Potential Modifiers

The history and lore of sorcery overflow with idiosyncratic details that add to the feel — and to the confusion — of magical theory and practice. The following smattering of details is drawn, like Hermetic theory, primarily from magical practice in the West, both High Magic and Folk Magic. The GM can include any, all, or none of these potential *additional, optional* modifiers in a *GURPS Cabal* game. As a general rule, adding these theoretical outliers to the magic system will make magic less predictable, which may be part of the intended flavor in some campaigns. It will also tend to strengthen "normal" folk against magic, especially non–magic users possessing folk wisdom or some occult lore. The GM is encouraged to refuse, or outright penalize, any abusive or exaggerated use of these (or any other) rules — magic is a personal business and depends in some part on the goodwill of the Aethyrs. Contrarily, a really creative or well roleplayed use of Hermetic magic might merit a bonus or allow an otherwise unused option, at the GM's option.

3.6.9.1 Eight Corners of the Year

Certain days serve as "hinges" on the magical calendar. Any magic at all may be cast at +2 on one of these days, and correctly–aspected magic may be cast at a whole mana level higher.

Yule: The winter solstice (usually around December 21), the shortest day of the year. Traditionally, the birthday of kings. (Alleborith, Phthenoth)

Imbolc, or Candlemas: The harbinger of spring, the beginnings of light and fertility; February 1. (Kumeat 1, Phoub 1, Saphathoraél)

Ostara: The vernal equinox (usually around March 21), the official beginning of spring when the day and night are in balance. (Alleborith, Charchnoumis, Harpax)

Beltane, or Roodmas: The feast of fire and love, May Day. (Anatreth, Eneuth, Kumeat 1) May Eve (April 30) is Walpurgisnacht, a day when the dead walk and winter takes its last blows. (Judal, Kumeat 1, Kurta 1)

Litha: The summer solstice (usually around June 21), the longest day of the year. (Alleborith, Methiex, Phoub 1)

Lughnasadh, or Lammas: A solar feast of first harvest and marriage; August 1. (Isrö, Kumeat 1, Na™th)

Mabon: The autumnal equinox (usually around September 21), the second harvest and the official end of summer balancing again the day and night. (Alleborith, Atrax, Bianakith)

Samhain, or Hallowe'en: The feast of the dead, and the beginning of winter; October 31. (Ieropa 1, Judal, Kumeat 1, Kurta 1)

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3.6.9.2 Insulators, Resistors, and Conductors

In addition to the more recondite magical materials known to the Cabal (pp. 00–00), many more common substances traditionally affect magical flows, either positively or negatively. By parallel to electrical theory, these substances can be divided into magical "conductors," which increase or enhance magical energies, and counter-magical "resistors," which disrupt or dampen them. Resistors can also serve as insulators, keeping magic within bounds, allowing it to focus or pool in "batteries" or "capacitors." Games in which common substances have that effect will likely feature a greater role for ad hoc and flexible magic. Magic may also be less of a monopoly in such games, since characters with a decent Occultism skill will be familiar with the effects of such substances.

Ashes: The embodiment of inert matter, a line of ashes can disrupt magic crossing it (–1 to –3 to caster's skill) or help draw an insulating magic circle (+1 to caster's skill for magic wholly within an ash circle).

Blood: One of the ultimate magical conductors; "the blood is the life," and the life-principle can clearly be seen as the magical essence of things. Having a blood connection to one's target, or establishing a blood connection to a magical item, can add +3 to skill; casting a spell while merely spattering one's blood adds +1 (further blood loss should use the *Sacrifice* rules in the sidebar on p. 00, below).

Cornmeal: Bread and grain traditionally serve as a kind of "power sink" for magical force, transmuting it from supernatural to natural. Some magical spell effects can actually be transferred to bread and eaten by "sin-eaters." Fresh bread may harmlessly absorb up to 3 points of magical energy per loaf. Cornmeal or flour helps focus magical energy as ashes, above.

Hawthorn: Associated with Christ's crown of thorns, hawthorn has been used to protect homes from fairies and witches for thousands of years. Hawthorn plants grow over sacred wells, such as that at Glastonbury. Casting magic across a hawthorn hedge, at a person wearing a hawthorn badge, or into a house guarded by a hawthorn wreath must be done at –3 to –5 to the caster's skill. A carved hawthorn staff, ironically, makes a superior magic staff (+2 to spells cast using a hawthorn staff), possibly because the hawthorn contains and focuses the magical energies of the mage.

Iron: There is no more common magic resistor than iron in all folk legend. Iron harms fae, drives off the devil, and breaks charms and glamours. The blacksmith, who uses iron all day, has traditionally been considered especially holy, thanks to his constant exposure to good, purifying iron. Casting magic on or across iron itself is done at –7 to skill; casting magic on a person wearing iron, or a house protected by an iron cross or horseshoe, or on a blacksmith must be done at –5. Iron cannot be a magic insulator. In games using this rule, any iron item intended to draw decanic power must be Enchanted or otherwise "magically degaussed." (In some traditions, magnetized iron becomes a magical conductor akin to blood.) The GM who doesn't want to completely short-circuit magic everywhere may rule that steel, as "impure" iron, doesn't have iron's effects.

Some fantasy novels and games restrict iron's inhibiting powers to "cold iron," an ahistorical neologism likely based on misremembered Kipling poetry. If the GM wishes, he may consider "cold iron" the same as cold-rolled iron, wrought iron, or meteoric iron. Alternately, meteoric iron may be a magical conductor, since it fell from the magically more-powerful higher spheres. In this case, not only does "star-iron" cause none of iron's ill effects, it grants +3 to +5 (depending on purity and amount) to the effective skill of any spell using it or cast through it.

Knots: Knots have had a mixed reputation in folklore; witches tied up storms and winds in knots, but good wives knitted good luck into knotted sweaters for their fishermen husbands. In general, knots seem to serve either as "containers" for magical spells, or as channelers for baleful energy — malign magic must run the entire length of the knotted string, growing steadily weaker as it does, before reaching its intended victim.

To represent this, spellcasters can create one-use magic items by knotting strings or cords. Use the rules for scrolls (p. B160), with two exceptions. The time to tie a magical knot is one minute per energy point, not one day, and the caster must roll against the Knots spell (p. M60) and Ritual Magic (Knot-Tying) skill instead of the Scroll spell. On the other end, anyone can tie or knit a defensive knot (the GM should require a successful roll against Climbing, Sailing, Hobby (Knitting), Escape, or whatever skill seems best) that will subtract one from the effective skill level of any spell cast against its wearer for each point by which the knot-worker succeeds. It takes 10 seconds to tie a defensive knot; for each additional full minute taken to tie it, the penalty to the caster's skill level increases by one.

Running Water: A very strong barrier against evil, and hence magic, of all sorts (likely due to running water's much lower incidence of amoebic contamination). Casting any spell (except Elemental Water spells) across running water is at -2 (for tiny creeks or apartment pipes) to -5 (for mighty rivers) to skill.

Salt: A powerful, ancient charm against evil (probably because of its preservative effects) and a traditionally magical material (probably because of its "magical" power to restore food's taste), salt takes on different roles in different magics. The GM may wish to tune salt's magic effect for the flavor he wishes; one possible version follows.

Rock or granulated salt acts as a magical resistor of magic cast across or into it (-2 to -4 to caster's skill). A pool or dish of saltwater can serve to "ground" magical energies; spells cast within scent of that water must roll a critical failure *twice* to have a "backfire" effect. Saltwater bodies large enough to show tides (seas, estuaries, and oceans) keep their salt in flux; thus spells cast on or across them may acquire anywhere from a -5 to a $+5$ modifier to skill (roll 2d6 and subtract 7). This modifier does not apply to spells of Elemental Water; the GM may exempt other "oceanic-flavored" spells, or grant them a positive modifier of some size, if he wishes.

Silk: In fairly late magical tradition, silk serves as a conductor and an insulator. It can transmit magic (a $+1$ or $+2$ to skill for spells cast along a silken cord) or, tied in a circle, insulate it (a $+1$ or $+2$ to skill for spells cast entirely within a silken circle).

3.6.9.3 Magical Languages

The Law of Names (p. 00) means that what you call a thing can potentially alter your power over it. The notion of magical languages expands this idea further; the closer your spell to the primordial language of Atziluth, the language of creation, the greater its power can be. Casting a spell in a foreign language usually requires a Language skill roll, or use of the Great Art of Memory (p. 00).

Mundane Languages: Speaking a spell in a common language such as English, Spanish, Chinese, modern Greek, etc., cheapens and pollutes its value; mundanely cast spells are at -5 to effective skill.

Sacred Languages: More closely attuned to spiritual matters, languages such as Rhomaic Greek, Latin, Old Slavonic, Glagolitic, Arabic, Aramaic, Coptic, Gaelic, Old Norse, Tibetan, and Hebrew are the traditional, "default" tongues of

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magic. They grant no bonus.

Ancient Languages: Languages spoken closer to the Creation would, logically, be closer to the original, magical language. Languages such as Akkadian, Ancient Egyptian, Goidelic, Sanskrit, and Homeric Greek grant +3 to skill with spells cast in them.

Esoteric Languages: These secret languages come very close to embodying magical truths. Most of them are unthinkable ancient, such as Adamic, the tongue spoken before the Tower of Babel, and Senzar, the language of the Atlanteans. Other esoteric languages include those spoken by exalted spiritual beings (such as the Enochian language of the Aethyrs discovered by John Dee) or tiny magical communities (such as the Sabaeon–Duriac used solely by the Sarmoung Brotherhood). All such languages are Mental/Very Hard skills, and grant at least +5 to skill with spells cast in them.

Poetry: A successful Poetry roll can recast a spell in poetic form, powerfully attuning it to the "music of the spheres." The bonus to effective skill with a spell equals the amount by which the Poetry skill roll was made. (As a benchmark, *GURPS Who's Who 1* gives Shakespeare Poetry–24; a +12 cap on poetic bonuses is more than fair.) Casting a poetic spell adds at least 2d6 minutes to spellcasting time, to compose and recite the poem. Reading a pre–composed poetic spell (or recalling one with skills such as Bardic Lore, Skaldic Lore, or Literature) cuts the bonus in half. As a rule of thumb, reading a pre–composed poetic spell cuts the additional time in half as well, although the GM may alter that for especially long or difficult poems. The GM may also modify the effectiveness of poetic magic for a caster with Bard, Singing, the Voice advantage or any other trait that would aid in (or, as with Stuttering, detract from) poetic presentation.

3.6.9.4 Sacrifices

Taking the anthropic principle (sidebar, p. 00) to its logical conclusion, many magicians have attempted to bribe the Aethyrs or their servitors for aid and extra decanic energy. Since the Aethyrs are immaterial, the thinking goes, destruction of a material item will gain their attention and favor. Modern Hermetic theory looks down on this practice as primitive and messy; whether it works is up to the GM. Sacrifices should match the proper correspondences; to invoke Aries, the sacrifice of a red ram will give noticeably better results than of some random chicken or rabbit. In general, sacrificed items should be highly flavored, noticeably valuable, or somehow different from the normal run of things. The following bonuses should be a guide for a sacrifice system:

Food, alcoholic beverages, tobacco or stimulants, incense +1 to +2

Artwork, jewelry, valuable goods, money +1 to +3

Live animals +2 to +4

Human beings +1 (homeless stranger) to +5 (beautiful virgin; royalty)

Caster's own blood +1 per 2 HT drained

Sacrificing a supernatural example of a given category will usually add +1 to the sacrifice's power. One of the Golden Apples of the Hesperides would be worth +3 as a food sacrifice; a magical sonnet in Byron's own hand would be worth +4; a live wyvern sacrifice would grant +5; and sacrificing a vampire king would be worth +6. Sacrifices must belong to

the caster, or at least be fully within his power: shooting an enemy gunman in the head during battle is *not* a decanically-effective human sacrifice. Not all Aethyrs (or other entities) desire human, or even animal, sacrifices! The GM should assign a penalty at least *double* the listed bonus amount to sacrifices that violates its Aethyr's principles. For example, a human sacrifice to Shaliah, the Lady of Material Happiness (ruler of Phthenoth, the decan of Healing) would modify the caster's skill by -2 to -10! Sacrifices grant only one bonus; burning musk, for example, can either be a +1 decanic correspondence with Sphand™r or a +1 sacrifice to its Aethyr. The total bonus available from sacrifices should be capped at +6, unless the GM wishes a very sacrifice-intensive game.

To further encourage sacrifices, the GM may use the Ritual Magic system instead of basic *GURPS* magic, as detailed below (sidebar, p. 00). Alternately, the GM may require the sacrifice by destruction of any item used to gain decanic or astrological bonuses, or give double the bonus if a correspondent item is destroyed during spellcasting. Even if the GM doesn't use the sacrifice system for any other magic, using it for Planar Summons, Summon Elemental, Bless, Summon Spirit, and similar invocations of spirit entities will add a great deal of the proper flavor to the proceedings.

3.6.9.5 Virginity

The purer the material, the better it can focus the decanic energies. This holds for magical components, for sacrifices (see above), and for the magus himself. For every three days of fasting, exercise, and celibacy before spellcasting, a magus can add +1 to his skill at any spell. Virgins make superb scryers, and have a natural +5 to spells invoking Na™th or Sphand™r; they are nearly "transparent" to those energies. For any material used in a magical spell casting or ritual (including the correspondences), the caster may add +1 for each +3 in bonuses derived from virgin (brand new, never used) material. If the caster hand-crafted (or personally grew or raised) the item, then he may add +1 for each such item. GMs wishing to make magic rarer and more difficult can use the inverse of this rule, and allow correspondence bonuses *only* from virgin materials.

Magical Patina: The inverse of this rule is that objects used repeatedly in magical spells become better and better conductors of magical energies (or, more negatively, take on the taint of magic). Any item used to focus decanic energies conveys a further +1 bonus to spells cast through its corresponding decan after a year of steady use. Further use grants further bonuses to its corresponding spells as follows:

10 years +2

50 years +3

100 years +4

500 years +5

1000 years +6

For each additional 500 years of constant use, the item adds an additional +1 bonus to its decanic spells. Some GMs may wish to similarly increase the Power of magical items, to further enhance the value of ancient and storied magical stones, staffs, and so forth.

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3.6.10 Ritual Magic

The Ritual Magic system from *GURPS Voodoo*, *GURPS Old West*, or *GURPS Spirits* has much the same goal as the Hermetic magic system presented in this book — to add a degree of historical realism and flavor to *GURPS* magic, albeit by completely rewriting the basic magic system rather than by adding to it. Given the widely varying cosmological assumptions made by the current Ritual Magic system(s) and the Cabal's Hermetic magic, mixing the two systems in the same game runs the risk of creating unbalanced characters, and a potentially incoherent story. This needn't prevent a GM running things fast and loose with either the Cabal as NPCs using Hermetic magic in a *GURPS Voodoo* game, or the Voudounistas as NPCs using Ritual Magic in a *GURPS Cabal* campaign. Practitioners of voudun might even be PCs, using their Ritual Magic to invoke possession by "loa" eikones from Briah, with membership in the Cabal similar to that granted psis and other "non-Hermetic" types. (GMs need have no qualms about overruling player requests for a single character to use both types of magic: the mental frameworks are vastly different.) It's not necessary to use the Ritual Magic system to have voudun bokors in your *GURPS Cabal* game, of course; the Planar Summons spell and judicious design of the loa summoned with it can encompass almost all voudun magic.

However, the Ritual Magic system would work quite well as the mechanical basis for the Cabal's thaumaturgy, and hence for the magic of a variant *GURPS Cabal* campaign. Cabalists become Initiates, with one rank of Initiation (p. VO55) for each Cabal rank. Add the various decanic modifiers to the Ritual Magic (Hermetic) spell roll as per the standard Hermetic magic rules. The various Aethyrs may be the equivalent of the voodoo loa, or (more likely) the dispatchers of spiritual beings (such as the egregores on p. 00) which carry out the Cabalist's wishes as expressed in communion with the Aethyrs. Each decan might end up as its own Path, or the various Paths might wend their way past numerous decans, at the GM's discretion. For more notes on combining story elements of the *GURPS Voodoo* Shadow War with *GURPS Cabal*, see the sidebar on p. 00.

3.6.11 GURPS Celtic Myth Tree Magic

The Tree Magic system on pp. CM94–112 is one of the best examples of a powerfully evocative magic system with little clear connection to the Hermetic system of the Cabal. (It also has little clear connection to the historical Druids, being based on the poetic imagination of Robert Graves.) However, unlike Ritual Magic (see above), it modifies the basic *GURPS Magic* system, which means that it is fundamentally compatible with Hermetic magic on a rules level. None of the Hermetic modifiers for decan, zodiac, planet, and so forth should apply to Tree Magic use in a *GURPS Cabal* campaign. The Druidic teachings depend not on the serenely mechanical "music of the spheres" and the resonance of the decans, but on the inherent connection between certain Words of Power (see p. 00), the ancient ogham alphabet, and the magical poetry of the primordial bards. In short, Druidic Tree Magic (if it exists in your campaign) is a sidestepping of the laws of the universe, a short-circuiting of magical reality akin to that performed by the qliphoth. This makes Tree Magic users dangerous to, and hence feared by, the Cabal — ideal villains (or hunted PCs) for a campaign. One more note: the Otherworld as described on pp. CM65–70 is, essentially, Fa'rie (p. 00) as it might have existed in the great age of the Celts, stretching from the British Isles on Assiah deep into the heart of Briah.

3.6.12 Rune Magic

As described on pp. M90–93 or in *GURPS Vikings*, Rune Magic establishes rules for "improvised enchantments" using scrolls, runestones, or other written surfaces to contain magical power. The theoretically-minded GM can either treat runes as "stepped-down" aspects of Words of Power (p. 00), as another application of Hermetic magical theory, or both.

In a practical sense, Rune Magic works as described. The Hermetic rune lore of the Cabal uses the Hebrew alphabet or Egyptian hieroglyphics rather more often than it does the Norse futhark, but the theory remains (in game mechanical terms at least) roughly the same. The Hermetic modifiers come into play when the runes are inscribed, rather than when they are activated; Activate Runes simply pulls the trigger on a magical bullet loaded previously.

3.6.13 Clerical Magic

Although the modern Cabal uses mostly mechanical metaphors grounded in physics and optics to describe the nature of reality (the "resonances" and "frequencies" of the decans, the world as hologram, etc.), the average Cabalist believes in gods. At high enough rank, he may even have met one or two of them. He may even worship one or more of them. Since much Cabalistic cosmology is rooted in the devoutly (if possibly heretical) Christian speculations of the Renaissance theurges, and in Jewish kabbalism (see sidebar, below), all but the most hard-headed Cabalists assume that at least some facets of the Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) have a basis in reality. Interpretations differ, of course, perhaps even more strongly within the Cabal than within human societies with less direct supernatural awareness. The GM has broad latitude in pinning down specifics, and can likely avoid doing so — Atziluth, the Spiritual Realm, is mysterious and inaccessible, and characters who manage to make their way there will likely have more immediate problems than theological disputation. There is no immediate mechanical obstacle to allowing clerical magic (pp. R100–113) in a *GURPS Cabal* campaign, although a would-be clerical mage might be required to actually visit and petition his god in Briah to gain Power Investiture (p. CI42). The powers available to the aging, and in many cases nearly-forgotten, gods of ancient man should be limited, especially compared to Hermetic magic, to retain the "default" *GURPS Cabal* feeling; perhaps only a few spells from a single college lie within any given deity's sphere of influence. The ineffable Godhead within Atziluth grants even fewer magics, seemingly preferring to operate by Miraculous Magic (pp. R113–115). A clerical magic-using, spell-slinging Jesuit priest, Baptist minister, or Shi'ite imam should have an enormous Unusual Background (over 50 points) to explain his anomalous relationship with the Unmoved Mover.

3.6.14 Kabbalah and the Cabal

Religiously or magically adventurous GMs may wish to add actual kabbalists (see *What's In A Name?* sidebar, p. 00) to their *GURPS Cabal* campaigns. For absolute fidelity to traditional kabbalistic orthodoxy, kabbalists must be Jewish rabbis, male, and over the age of 40. In practice, and for drama's sake, the latter two requirements can slip (for a kabbalist rabbi's spoiled or studious daughter or wife, or for the kind of ambitious hothead who Dares Too Much Too Soon, respectively). This would likely require an Unusual Background, however. Being a kabbalist requires a Discipline of Faith (Jewish mysticism), worth –10 points (p. CI69). A kind of "low-powered" kabbalist, the baal shem ("master of the name") also exists, who need not be a rabbi, or even (specifically) Jewish. Christian or Islamic kabbalists (of whom there were many, beginning in the late 14th century) would technically be baal shem, and may be charged Unusual Background costs to boot.

Kabbalists create their enchantments or cast their spells by divine power from the Realm of Atziluth. In rules terms, kabbalah derives its basis from the rule (p. CI17) that one character point equals 20 points of enchantments. This can be applied in two ways. First, character points can be invested in an actual magical object or objects, typically a scroll or periapt containing a magical Name of God or verse from the Torah. (Only pen and parchment are required to create such an item.) Second, if the character is a kabbalist, they can be held in reserve for use during play. When they are used, the appropriate enchantment takes effect when the holy Names or words are spoken aloud.

3 Chapter Two: Hermetic Magic

A starting character can have up to 30 character points traded for magical energy points. A kabbalist can gain additional power through a process comparable to improving skills through study. Spending 200 hours in prayer or meditation gains 1 character point's worth of magical energy, or 20 energy points — that is, 10 hours equates to 1 energy point, making this system equivalent to slow and sure enchantment (10 hours being one full day of spiritual exercise). However, a character can also gain power through study, at 1/2 the normal rate, or simply through leading a holy life of good conduct, at 1/4 the normal rate. Finally, the performance of a major mitzvah (meritorious act) is worth one character point (minor mitzvot are subsumed under the rule for gaining power through leading a good life). Baal shem gain all points at half the rate rabbinical kabbalists do; at the GM's discretion, they may not be allowed to gain points for mitzvot or prayer.

Kabbalah does not have standard spell lists. Rather, it is a system of improvised magic, based on the Hebrew alphabet in a way comparable to Rune Magic (p. M90–93). The equivalent to Rune–Lore is the skill of Gematria. At the GM's option, a kabbalist may also be able to use these energy points as "spells" as well as "enchantments." Each energy point that is not committed to an enchantment can be temporarily expended once per session of play. The resulting magical effect has its normal duration; further expenditure of energy points can increase this.

3.6.14.1 Gematria (Mental/Very Hard) Defaults to Cryptanalysis–4 or Occultism–5.

Prerequisite: Hebrew–12+

Gematria is basically numerology, a system for assigning numerical values to the Hebrew letters and working out which words have the same or related numerical values. In general, it is used like Rune–Lore (see p. CI149 or p. M90). Each letter of the Hebrew alphabet is a separate skill, equivalent to one of the words used in improvised magic. Since there are only 23 letters, the noun Magic/Destiny is unavailable (the equivalent concept would be God, who is outside of human control), and the verbs Protect/Guard and Warn are combined. The resulting 10 verbs can be equated to the 10 sephiroth as well; see *The Sephiroth* (sidebar, p. 00) for specifics.

4 Chapter Three: Lies and Legends

To Brian's fatigue-fogged eyes, it looked like the very forest was moving down the hill.

When he rubbed them hard, though, the arboreal landslide resolved itself into rough definition — lean, rawhide-tough Norse warriors with pine boughs tied to their spears, their ranks filled out by furtive Lowlanders wearing green cloaks and rapacious expressions.

Then he blinked, and as water filled his eyes, again he saw Birnam Wood flowing into the valley before Dunsinane Castle.

"I don't think I'm tired enough even now to hallucinate like this," Brian said, "so it must be . . ."

"Magic?"

John Dee's voice was musical, even if to Brian's 20th-century ear it sounded like a cross between Richard Burton Welsh and Appalachian hillbilly. The words, however, were pure Dee.

"And sure, 'tis true 'tis glamoury. Why else would we be here and not at home? 'Twould not be for the fine repasts, i' faith."

Brian had little good to say about Scottish food in 2001, much less in 1057 A.D., so he kept quiet. Not that he had much chance to get a word in; Dee's "absences of mind" could last for hours, but when you had his attention, he didn't waste much time.

"That gangling rogue with pinecone on his spear, a tool of Garravin's from clan Macduff. For reasons that remain to me unclear, our rival fain would see Macbeth eras'd, from mind as well as Scotland's rocky shore."

"And so he's somehow manipulated Macduff into overthrowing Macbeth, and he's using magic to conceal not only the army, but this whole battle! That's why we couldn't sry into it! Is that why we came here?"

"For that, and for the thing itself. When draws Macduff his sword, the spear he'll drop — at that, you'll take it up yourself and hie yourself to me upon this hill."

Brian knew better than to argue at the notion of diving into a medieval battlefield unarmed and nearly exhausted — if his magic couldn't keep him alive here, he didn't belong in John Dee's service. Brian began mentally reviewing insertion-and-evasion tactics, and considering which spells would suit them best.

Dee's liquid speech again broke into Brian's reverie:

"Once done, we'll call on Master Will. I have a thought to hire a Scottish play, and Garravin we'll discommode once more."

4 Chapter Three: Lies and Legends

The Cabal emerged from myth and remains a rumor. Its past, deeply embedded in conspiracy and choked with misdirection, can hardly be separated from lurid occult anecdotes or from obsessive paranoid scribblings — in fact, it seems almost entirely made up of both. Its history, its dispersal and influence, and its continuing goals — all of these remain subjects of bitter controversy among occultists, fringe-watchers, and Cabalists themselves.

4.1 The History of the Cabal

Napoleon Bonaparte said that history was a lie agreed upon, and he made enough of it to know. The Cabal can't agree on all the details of its own history any more than it can on any other tendentious issue. Even more than works of exoteric, mundane history, the chronicles of the Cabal depend very much upon the historian. Where the Eightfold Splendor of Heket claims that Napoleon was an inspired avatar of Zeus guided by a holy council of sages, the Apis' Crosses Lodge mutters darkly that he was a homunculus created from Abyssal matter to be the vile pawn of the Sons of Imhotep. The following, then, represents a consensual "best guess," with some of the more important (or interesting) doctrinal differences highlighted.

4.1.1 In the Beginning

Ancient legends from the Vedic sagas to Mayan codices to Hebrew scriptures all speak of a great time of destruction that altered the face of the world forever. According to orthodox Cabalistic theory, all these tales refer to the First Creation, and to its catastrophic end, metaphorically recalled as a cataclysm of fire and flood, the Deluge. Scholars have reached no consensus as to the extent of this destruction — whether all Four Realms were remade, or merely some iteration of the outer three layers. Occult paleohistorians agree that Assiah was not always as it appears today; that the appearance of the decanic "hologram" has shifted profoundly at least once within the last hundred millennia. Cabalist lodges such as the Wheel of Ptah or the Amonis Albioni attempt to trace the cosmic "fault lines," claiming to detect signs of phenomenological "reality quakes" as recently as the early 18th century. Many of these fault lines seem to correspond with the Gates of Thoth (p. 00), or with other soft places in reality.

Lemuria (as the lost Pacific supercontinent is generally known) and Atlantis almost certainly existed, in some sense, at some time before the Deluge. However, if the Deluge solely represents the remaking of the First Creation, the only remnants of those species and civilizations should, theoretically, be qliploth (p. 00), the cast-off shells of the First Creation. A few fanatical Cabalists, such as the members of the Purified Lodge of Harmukhis, do, in fact, consider the Lemurian survivors and Minos' Atlantis (and dinosaurs) to somehow be "sanitized" or "camouflaged" extrusions of qliploth energy. Most Cabalists, however, believe that either a parapsychical "echo" of the Deluge, or some other large-scale magical phase shift, destroyed Lemuria and Atlantis, which were both unthinkable ancient but authentic elements of the present-day Material Realm.

4.1.2 The Splendor That Was Egypt

If the fabled Sage-Kings of Atlantis actually ruled the earth through magic, the Deluge left them splintered and impoverished. Only the most ancient Garamantean civilizations of the Sahara grassland and the primordial Sphinx-carving culture of ancient Egypt retained the old lore. As the Sahara dried, the Garamanteans invaded Egypt, ruining both empires and plunging them into barbarism. However, out of the resulting hybrid barbarian culture rose the mighty Egyptian Old Kingdom, which joined gods and mankind in perfection. Through the sacred hieroglyphics, the

gods granted magical knowledge to the priesthood, maintained a glorious afterlife for them deep within Bria, and taught them the necessary rituals to attain it in death. Serene in their immortality, and possessing mighty magics still unequalled today, the priests constructed a mighty ley network of temples and pyramids throughout the Nile Valley. This further increased priestly power (raising Egypt to normal mana during the Old Kingdom; within certain temple precincts, the mana level may have reached still higher yet) and enhanced the energies flowing to the gods from their subjects' worship.

4.1.2.1 The Doom That Came To Memphis

The linchpin of this system was the Pharaoh, chief priest and god-king of the land. He personified Egypt and incarnated the great god Ra, serving as a key conduit for magical power from gods to priests and vice versa. Unfortunately, being worshiped as a living god goes to one's head; the Pharaohs soon began secretly hoarding, and then diverting, magical power for themselves. The Pharaoh Cheops built the Great Pyramid and (according to rumor) planned to usurp the priests and rule directly using its powers. What the priests did to him remains unknown, but it may explain why his body has never been found, and perhaps even whether it was placed in his pyramid at all. Cheops' son Chephren may have been heir to his father's schemes; he built his own pyramid at Giza, and after restoring the Sphinx built (or excavated) the secret Chamber of Secrets beneath it.

When Chephren's son Mycerinus showed every sign of building his own pyramid and again attempting to make Pharaoh supreme, the priests of Ra intervened. They conspired against the Pharaoh while encouraging gross decadence at court and making sure the line of Cheops finally died out. The high priest User-Ra placed his own son on the throne, but in so doing knocked askew the careful balance of the Old Kingdom. After a welter of coups, conspiracies, and one outright assassination, the priesthood relaxed during the long reign of Pepi II. However, when Pepi II died in 2184 B.C., one of his youngest wives, the Queen Nitocris, seized power.

4.1.2.2 The Birth of the Cabal

Nitocris used blasphemous sorceries to summon a great Pharaoh from the land of the dead. Nobody knows which one, precisely, but the Cabal knows him as Khaibitu-na-Khonsu. He and Nitocris conspired with Thoth to gain the secrets of magic directly, and use them to destroy Ra and the other gods. Either Khaibitu-na-Khonsu miscalculated, or the priesthood attacked Nitocris before she was fully prepared; rather than a surgical strike, the war against the gods decimated Egypt. The ley networks splintered, vast quantities of mana flared out of existence, the seas boiled and the skies fell. Possibly in a desperate bid to reverse the disaster, Khaibitu-na-Khonsu ripped open the Gates of Thoth. He succeeded only in sundering Egyptian history itself; the next 150 years plunged Egypt into near-primal chaos. A surviving fragment of history records that Nitocris killed herself having seen what her vengeance cost; Khaibitu-na-Khonsu vanished in a final cataclysm.

With the ascent of the 11th Dynasty, Egypt's stability returned in the Middle Kingdom. The sorcerers who followed Khaibitu-na-Khonsu fled to other lands or went deep underground. From this tradition of secrecy and banishment, the Cabal was born. The Cabal continuously plotted against the Pharaohs, attempting to overthrow them and rule the country. Occasionally, such efforts would show transitory success, but overreaching and priestly enmity weakened the Cabal time and again. By the time the Cabal broke the Middle Kingdom, its foreign lodges had made enemies outside Egypt as well. The djinn invaded Egypt After the failure of the Akhenaton project, which would have built a new Pharaonic empire without the gods, the priesthood drove the Cabal back into exile and into the shadows.

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4.1.2.3 The Alexandrian Age

A thousand years after Akhenaton, another Cabalist became Pharaoh as Nectanebo II. Thanks to a lengthy contest with the djinn in Persia, he was actually able to unify Egypt under his rule and make plans for the future. Nectanebo lured the djinn into Egypt, tying them down in the south, while he escaped to Macedon and magically created (or secretly fathered, or both) Alexander the Great. Alexander served the Cabal well, smashing Persia, liberating Egypt, and founding the great city of Alexandria at the mouth of the Nile to serve as the Cabal's new headquarters. The Cabal owned Ptolemaic Egypt, and accumulated the entire wisdom of the known world in an enormous Library of over 700,000 scrolls and tablets.

With this enormous knowledge base as a draw, Cabal magicians began making regular contact with other supernaturals and inviting them to study at the Library in exchange for their own magical lore. By the first century B.C., vampires, fae, lycanthropes, sphinxes, and even a few renegade djinn had joined the Cabal, bringing vital information and fascinating new perspectives. Studies of the ancient works of Hermes Trismegistos further impelled the Cabal's vibrant intellectual growth, as Cabalist delvers teased out many of the ancient secrets and began to codify, systematize, and even improve on them. Cabalists began exploring the inner Realms on a regular basis, further expanding the Cabal's understanding of the universe.

Unfortunately, the Cabal was neglecting politics. The Ptolemies slowly decayed, and the Cabal's efforts to save Egypt under Cleopatra, and then Mark Antony, came too late to keep the Romans from occupying Egypt. As Cabalist scholars continued to peel back the skin of the world, Cabalist agents tried to suborn and control Rome. Out of practice, their first efforts merely drove succeeding emperors into debauchery, insanity, halfwittedness, and sadism. They nearly brought the empire crashing down in civil war, but a djinn attack during the Jewish Revolt distracted the Cabal long enough for stability to reassert itself. However, the Cabal was growing stronger and more knowledgeable daily, and Rome more ossified and vulnerable. It was inevitable that the Cabal succeed, and their agent the Grand Master Julia Maesa raised her son to the throne as the Emperor Elagabalus in 218 A.D.

4.1.2.4 The Fall of the Cabal

Unfortunately, the Cabal's rise to the purple came too late to save the Empire from the weaknesses the Cabal's own subversion had encouraged. Plague demons erupted from untended Roman garrisons, splinter conspiracies launched their own civil wars for the throne, and vampiric cults sprang up in the teeming cities. Battling these foes, the Cabal released too much energy at once and destabilized the weather patterns, sending Rome spiraling into famine and drought. Dealing with these problems overextended the Cabal and exposed it to attacks from outside rivals such as the werewolves in the German forests and the djinn in the Persian deserts. Aurelian, the last Cabal puppet Emperor, reconquered Alexandria from the djinn-backed Zenobia of Palmyra, but her retreating forces burnt the Cabal archives, libraries, and museums. An officers' conspiracy murdered Aurelian in 275, and with its heart scorched out and its head cut off, the Cabal collapsed. Too many of its resources were tied up in the futile attempt to preserve Rome; too much of the remainder had gone up in flames. After a further century of failure and loss, the Cabal disintegrated completely.

4.1.3 Dark Ages and Dissension

During the next millennium, many different streams of Cabalists attempted to restore the ancient structures. Would-be Grand Masters built up traditions, labored in crypts, puzzled out archaic inscriptions to gather knowledge. Rival groups clashed over influence, resources, and power. Every so often, the mortal authorities caught wind of what was going on

and lashed out in greed or blind panic, disarranging matters yet further. Small-scale feuds occasionally erupted into open warfare, which as often as not wrecked the laborious mystical infrastructure both sides had assembled. Many of the elder magi died scrabbling over scraps of knowledge or items they would have disdained in the glory days of ancient Egypt.

4.1.3.1 Cabalistic Fragments

The wreck of the Roman Empire left the Cabal in shards. The Egyptian, Mesopotamian, and North African Lodges fell to djinn attacks under cover of the Arab conquests. The Cabal in the surviving Byzantine East turned turtle, and worked to completely interpenetrate the imperial bureaucracy. Many Cabalists across the Mediterranean fled to Constantinople, bringing a few salvaged ancient manuscripts or powerful artifacts as the price of admission into the Byzantine Lodges. In the West, the surviving Cabal attempted to found magical kingdoms. Incompetence and disorganization sent Merovingian France adrift; the devoutly Catholic Carolingians who succeeded them worked hard to stamp out "unnatural magic" completely, although they also managed to stop the djinn invasion of Europe at Tours in 732. Across the Channel, Morgan's fae coup d'etat undid Merlin's Britain and left the isles to barbarian ravages.

4.1.3.2 The Age of Garravin

The fae wizard Garravin came of age during Charlemagne's campaign against magic, and resolved to re-unify the Cabal under his own leadership. A deep student of Hermetic wisdom, Garravin wished to preserve the ancient lore. Also, perhaps more importantly, he wanted to protect the existence of the fae on Earth. His powerful position in the Sidhe fae aristocracy reinforced his superb strategic instincts. Over the next three centuries, he brought the wild shapeshifter clans of the North into the Cabal, founded the first magical academies since the fall of Alexandria, and re-organized the lines of succession and advancement within the Cabal, establishing the system of ultors and mentors that still operates today. He defanged the Carolingian anti-magic forces by co-opting the Vatican, and rerouted their aggression into the Crusades against the djinn. To wage these Crusades, Garravin trained human sorcerer-knights in Sidhe combat techniques and magical archaeology, founding the Knights Templar as the fighting core of the Cabal.

However, his autocratic style, brutal punishments of "rebellious" Lodges, and penchant for long-range conspiracies created more opposition than they squelched. The final break came at a magical conclave at Gisors, France, in 1188 to plan the response to the djinn reconquest of Jerusalem the previous year. Materializing from out of a magical elm tree with roots in both Assiah and Briah, Garravin accused his own creations, the Templars, of treason. The Templar Grand Master Gerard de Ridefort chopped down the elm, and launched an all-out revolt against Garravin's rule. The War of the Elm pitted Lodge against Lodge from Iceland to Muscovy. Even the Byzantine Lodges got drawn in, when Garravin's crusaders sacked Constantinople in 1204 to seize its magical libraries for his own. The fragile unity of the Cabal, enforced by Garravin with such ferocity and at such cost, collapsed again. Garravin crushed the Cathar Lodges in 1227 and engineered the destruction of the Templars in 1307, but these hammer blows did nothing to reunify the Cabal. Just as it had during the wars over Rome, the Cabal's profligate magical expenditure upset the weather, bringing on the Little Ice Age, the Black Death, and the end of high medieval culture. Finally, on a summons from King Oberon (who had removed his domain into the Astral Realm in 1212 to avoid Garravin's war), Garravin withdrew to Fa'rie in 1378, leaving the field empty.

4.1.4 The Renaissance

However, the turmoil Garravin stirred up, and the academic work of his Black Schools, would create fertile soil for the Cabal's rebirth in the next hundred years. Refugee Templars brought their excavated scrolls together with looted copies of Vitruvius from the Byzantine libraries. When the djinn finally sacked Constantinople in 1453, they drove a further stream of isolated Cabalists into contact with the fermenting magical scene in Florence, Venice, and Milan. These new Italian Lodges decided to rebuild the Cabal, this time from the ground up. Italy had seen intense warfare between pro- and anti-Garravin forces, but the two sides, forced into geographical proximity and left adrift by Garravin's retreat, found that they had much more in common with each other than with any outsiders. The resurgence of anti-magical feeling (and occasional outright witch-hunting) in the outside Church probably intensified this sentiment.

On the Byzantine model, anyone with something to contribute to the consolidation of magical learning was accepted into the movement. Garravin's crusades had also brought immense wealth into the Italian trading cities, allowing Lodges there to spread their influence by other means — bribery, buyouts, and bonuses. Finally, the Italian Lodges had a qualitative advantage that their bankrupt, broken, exhausted rivals could never equal — the lost works of Hermes Trismegistos, discovered in a Byzantine monastery during the sack of 1453 and smuggled to Florence. Rather than resist, the rest of Europe allowed itself to be seduced into the new, reborn Cabal. By 1500, Garravin's dream of a unified Cabal open to all magical beings had essentially come true, although Garravin did not rejoin it until 1688.

4.1.4.1 Faust and Prospero

Flush with pride at its rebirth, the Cabal returned its attention to the courts of Europe. Alchemists, astrologers, and other would-be court magicians fanned out across the continent seeking gainful employment and the ear of princes. Sorcerers who could make gold or provide intelligence received small rewards and empty titles; those who refused (or had studied other fields of magic) found themselves condemned as servants of the Devil. The wide-ranging curiosity of the period did, in fact, lead many Cabalists to investigate demon-assisted magic, although the payoff was seldom worth it in the long run. Eventually, however, it sank into the Cabalists that they actually had more resources than the human monarchs whose flighty approval they sought. Kings needed wizards, not the other way around.

A few Cabalists attempted to fill this need, with indifferent success. The vampire Vlad Tepes tried to become king of Hungary, but underestimated his opposition and retired to his Balkan principality. The diviner and sorcerer Agrippa attempted to gain influence over Charles V, but his jealous patron Margaret of Austria kept him to herself. On the verge of becoming magical governor of Salzburg, the alchemist Paracelsus was murdered in 1541 by unknown forces. The brilliant magus Guillaume Postel tried to enlist King Francis I of France, and later King Henry II, as the King of the World and exoteric head of the Cabal. Catherine de'Medici took the simpler tack of marrying Henry II and utterly dominating their children, Kings Francis II, Charles IX, and Henry III; her bloodthirstiness unfortunately distracted her from consolidating magical power in France. The Grand Master John Dee came closest of all, magically molding Elizabethan England into a nascent Arthurian golden age. Unfortunately, his opponents at court, Garravin's jealous interference in Dee's embassies to Fa'rie, and a misguided attempt to recruit the sorcerer emperor Rudolf II of Bohemia into his faction strained Dee's resources to the breaking point.

4.1.4.2 The Rosicrucian Revelation

Following the stagnation of Dee's Elizabeth project and the death of the sorcerer emperor Rudolf II, the Cabal worried that they had again over-extended their resources and decided to try a mass recruiting drive. (The Great Witch Hunt had also cut into the supply of magically-gifted individuals.) To simultaneously announce their intentions and to warn off any possible poachers on their occult turf, the Cabal released three letters between 1614 and 1616 purporting to be from the "Fraternity of the Rosy Cross," better known as the Rosicrucians. Unfortunately, the Cabal's remaining rivals in Europe interpreted the "Rosicrucian" call for magical union as a Cabalistic ultimatum to surrender or be assimilated. Their panicked defensive strikes plunged all of Europe into thirty years of war and leveled a third of Germany. The Cabal won the magical struggle, albeit at great cost. The 1642 overthrow of the Stuarts in England, for example, badly hampered Cabalist efforts in Britain until the 1660 Restoration, and set their plans in America back by over a century. When the dust had cleared, the Cabal reaffirmed its policy of concealing its existence — and, by extension, that of the entire supernatural.

4.1.5 The Enlightenment

To the Cabal's great satisfaction and moderate surprise, it proved much easier to rule the world when you didn't tell it you were doing so first. Over the next two centuries, the Cabal vastly expanded its power and interests. Cabalists followed European explorers across the globe, reconnected with the Templar Refuge in America, and vastly increased the Cabal's economic power. One of Dee's most promising pupils, Isaac Newton, volunteered to divert the remaining European interest in invisible forces into other paths; his promulgation of mechanical models for the behavior of matter nicely cemented the growing materialism of society.

4.1.5.1 Masonic Meddling

Although the Cabal by then had seen the wisdom and accepted the general practice of concealing the supernatural, that did make it hard to recruit new Cabalists. Existing Cabal members brought their families into the fold, passing magical secrets on from generation to generation, but the Cabal knew that new blood remained a necessity rather than a luxury. Carefully dribbling out the plan in tiny stages from tightly controlled mouthpieces (no replay of the Rosicrucian disaster *this* time!), the Cabal laid the groundwork for a movement combining political interest with social climbing and a whiff of mysticism just strong enough to serve the Cabal's ultimate goals. The Cabal modeled the new societies on its own Lodge-and-degree structure, and refined their own system using it as a test-bed. Naming this network after the stonemasons' guilds Garravin had established in the Gothic era, the Cabal cultivated Freemasonry as its "nursery garden" for recruiting and, as more and more wealthy fish swam into the net, an outlet for political and economic influence. The Cabal even established a Masonic Republic in America, although the ensuing Masonic Revolution in Europe nearly got out of hand. However, it did return Egypt to Cabalistic control, which made the twenty years of warfare a net plus.

4.1.6 The Victorian Era

This was, in retrospect, another golden age for the Cabal. Excavations in Egypt uncovered further ancient truths and techniques, as did the reports of Cabal explorers around the globe. The Cabal dominated the Earth, checking the djinn in the Great Game and stalemating the Sirri with magically reinforced gunboat-and-Maxim-gun imperialism, all the while manipulating the aristocratic rulers of Europe with power and the brash robber barons of America with money. Lords of the Material, the Cabal began an aggressive campaign of exploring the Inner Realms, adding vast amounts of raw

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experience and information to the rigorous theoretical magics developed by the Masonic recruits in Newton's footsteps. Erasmus Rooke developed brilliant new sorcerous devices, and the Cabal began to actively recruit psis and investigate psionic powers. And then, for some reason, it all came apart.

4.1.6.1 Apocalypse Then

A mysterious assassination, a madman's miscalculation, a crucial shift in Parliament, and the world was at war. The Cabal was caught flat-footed and complacent; slow to react to the carnage, it had to spend precious time putting down brush necromancies and reorienting its efforts against the djinn. How to prevent such a disaster from happening again gripped the Cabal in the interwar period. Erasmus Rooke supplied a number of Cabalist tools, dupes, and agents with amazing technomagical devices in the hope of stimulating another Newton and recreating the Enlightenment. Some of their more muscular "investigations" wound up discommoding his fellow Grand Master Fang Wu Shih, who had planned to prevent another war by weakening the warmaking powers — European governments. The Sons of Imhotep murmured of the "prophecies of the new sun that would eclipse Ra-Harmakhis" and wildly set about their necromancies to thwart its coming.

The werewolf Grand Master Leonard de Sarrazin, meanwhile, decided that only a magically-aware leadership could save Europe, and encouraged a collection of Middle Circle Cabalists in the Lodge of the Midwinter Aton to parlay their "stopgap" influence in Bavarian politics into real power. Sadly, Sarrazin and his followers had all of John Dee's arrogance with none of his deftness; the Midwinter Aton metastasized into the Third Reich with astonishing speed. The world plunged back into war, this time only emerging when four fifths of the productive economies in existence were rubble, and eighty million people were dead.

4.1.6.2 Cracks in the Plaster

The war had also weakened the Cabal; an alarming number of Cabalists sat it out or even aided the Midwinter Aton and their sorcerous Nazi apprentices. As the Inner Circle took stock of this unwelcome development, the American and Soviet governments launched a Cold War seemingly designed to inconvenience the Cabal. Both nations, and many of their allies, instituted new, paranoid measures that came close to exposing (and may have exposed, to the secret services) the existence of the paranormal. The national security bureaucracies weeded out many of the Cabal's agents in both countries — magicians and the undead seldom have pristine backgrounds — and cut the Cabal dangerously out of many loops. The new rivalry spread to the Third World; the Sirri pulled their continent out from under the European Cabal's thumb, and the djinn began stirring up new trouble in the resurgently-fractious Middle East. Brush wars confused things even more, and the ripple of genocides from the Ukraine to Cambodia to Nigeria opened up a lot of new territory for the qliphoth to enter. And just as the Cabal had finally moderated the Cold War and rebuilt its tenuous hold on global events — the whole thing collapsed overnight.

4.1.7 The Cusp of the Millennium

Between the shifting alliances and uncertain actors of the modern world, the Cabal has no shortage of challenges. The djinn plot in their wastes, the qliphoth fester in the chinks of reality, the Cabal itself becomes tense and brittle with nervous dissension. For every Lodge or Master that seeks to conquer the world, there is one who fears it and retreats to the comforts of research and the glories of the Inner Realms. Both may decide to crush humanity — including their own — to do so. The past may give a pattern, but it may not be much of a guide. Modern Cabalists can, and must, chart their

own future, and that of the Cabal, in its fifth millennium.

4.2 The Geography of the Cabal

Although Cabal activities range from orchid-raising on the flanks of the Abyss to subverting an army of skeleton-men from behind the sphere of Jupiter, the Cabal itself remains tied to the Earth. Specific points in material space, from mighty Stonehenge to the kobold colony beneath the streets of Memphis, Tennessee, still matter to the Cabal, and they will kill to defend them. Other places present different challenges.

4.2.1 The Cabal Around the World

The Cabal's traditional power remains centered — and seemingly secure — in Europe, Egypt, Australia, and North America. The Middle East, barely contained by oil money and NATO, is ripe for another djinn explosion; China remains a sleeping tiger. Elsewhere, opportunities abound.

4.2.1.1 The Wild East

The sudden collapse of the Soviet empire threw the Cabal for a loop, not least because they didn't cause it. Suddenly the loot of seven decades of materialist terror was open to every Lodge from Berlin to Vladivostok, and Cabal operations in Russia became a feeding frenzy. Even now conditions there more closely resemble the Cabal's medieval era of all against all, as fundamental disagreements between the Grand Masters Oleupata and Koschei (both of whom have ties of blood and sentiment to the area) leave local Lodges without discipline, guidance, or protection. Adding to the danger and confusion, the GKUV (see sidebar, p. 00) seems determined to reinvent itself as the psionic masterminds behind the Russian mafia, and its network of telepathic informers is everywhere.

4.2.1.2 The Pacific Rim

The Cabal absorbed its Japanese opposite number, the Mahoryu, during the American postwar occupation; the Cabal's "honorable acceptance" of the Hidden Shogun (who, in fact, has not been seen since 1707) as a Grand Master melded the two organizations effectively, if not seamlessly. Currently, the Cabal concentrates on reaffirming its relations with the local kami and exploring the ancient archives of various mystical dojos. Outside its Japanese stronghold, the Cabal works to cement its grip over tumultuous Southeast Asia. The Golden Lodge of Asten, a major player in the occult artifact business since the 1920s, operates out of Djakarta, having removed there when China recovered Hong Kong in 1997. The big question mark in the region remains the ultimate goal of the insidious Grand Master, Dr. Fang (p. 00).

4.2.1.3 South Asia

The Cabal had already copied or removed most of the easily accessible Indian lore during the British Raj. Since Indian independence in 1947, the constant infighting of the lively and active Hindu gods has made deeper exploration of the subcontinent's secrets more difficult. This leaves opportunities for occult advancement relatively thin on the ground here. The Cabal's Lodges here suffer a "brain drain," as their most promising recruits leave for positions closer to the Grand Masters in Europe and America. Rumors of a major rakshasa infiltration into the Indian Cabal may herald either another magical massacre of the kind the Cabal squelched in 1857 or the opening of a new front in the Great Game against the djinn as the mosques boil from Kabul to Casablanca.

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4.2.1.4 Africa

For two centuries, Africa has been the destination for a certain breed of Cabalist. The thanatologist with a brilliant idea only requiring three thousand or so corpses — very fresh. The speculator in urgent need of sudden, untraceable wealth. The visionary wishing to carve the ideal society out of the jungle. The seeker of secrets long dead and wisely buried. As the continent groans under wars, rapine, and epidemics, those Cabalists with something to hide or nothing to lose still ooze into Africa. The ancient African secret society of sorcerers, the Sirri (see sidebar, p. 00), would probably have resented the Cabal's exclusive claim to the wisdom of Egypt regardless of which Cabalists they met. Because the Sirri met the Cabal's desperate dregs, they have pledged to destroy it. And not even legend remembers the name of the last mortal enemies of the Sirri.

4.2.1.5 Latin America and the Caribbean

This area has traditionally been a problem region for the Cabal, ever since Cortez prevented the rogue Templar death-cultist Knights of the Skull (see sidebar, p. 00) from summoning Huitzilopochtli in 1519. The Skull-Knights, the Cabal, and the Sirri (who flooded the region with initiates during the slave trade) have fought a three-cornered battle over the Caribbean for centuries. Although the Cabal forcibly gained the upper hand here in the 19th century, so far permanent, stable control eludes it. Threats like reincarnated Inca narcotraffickers in Peru and Colombia, Nazi covens still hiding out in Paraguay and Chile, and CIA-trained anti-magic death squads in Guatemala keep life interesting, and shorter than average, for Cabalists south of the border.

4.2.2 The Gates of Thoth

Inner Circle Cabalists believe that during his war with the god Ra in the third millennium B.C., Khaibitu-na-Khonsu, the first Grand Master, cast a great spell that created what are now known as the Gates of Thoth. Whether as part of the pharaoh-mage's plan, an unknown interface with the magics of his ally Thoth, or as a wild "backfire," a series of interlinked gates suddenly rippled across all Four Realms and throughout observed time. If there is an underlying pattern to their geometry, no Cabalist has discerned (or publicized) it. Some Masters and Grand Masters have met with limited success in predicting the appearances of the Gates, arguing that the Gates do follow at least some short-term formulae. The possible uses of the Gates to the Cabal (or to individual Grand Masters) are many: changing history, extending life, even bringing unearthly Things from beyond the stars to this planet.

The Gates of Thoth open and close at seemingly random times. They often appear in high mana places, but have also been known to materialize in the most mundane of environments. A Gate appears as a "hole" in the air in the shape of an equilateral triangle. The height from base to apex is usually around 10 feet, but the Gates rarely appear at ground level, often materializing dozens of feet above the ground. A gate usually remains open for 3 to 18 hours, during which travel is permissible both into and out of the gate. When used in conjunction with the Planar Summons spell (p. M65), the gate increases the skill roll by 6 and reduces the energy cost to 10.

When a person steps through a Gate, he will usually move backward in time to another gate appearing at the same place. Occasionally, travel will occur across space or even forward in time. Gates can span hours or millennia, but a slim majority open across one to three centuries. A gate may also open to another dimension entirely, and this always occurs if the Planar Summons spell is being used. The actual route in space, time, and dimension that PCs travel through the gates is subject to the imagination and whimsy of the GM.

4.3 Whispers in the Darkness

Although individual Cabalist and Lodge goals may vary, there are certain dreams almost every Cabalist shares. Throughout history, and across the Realms, these goals recur. It is such common ideals, and common pursuits like these, that help bind the diverse Cabal into one body. Many Cabalists believe that all these goals are really the same: that (for example) once the magical city is founded, its streets will point the way to the Grail, which grants immortality.

4.3.1 The Great Quests

Although almost any of the rare or numinous artifacts, spells, items, or techniques mentioned in this book have been (or could be) the object of a Cabalist's quest, there are a few goals for which the search has spanned centuries. The Blind Haroeris Lodge, and other questing Lodges, have almost made the quest itself the goal at times.

4.3.1.1 The Golden Fleece

The legendary ram's fleece sought by Jason and the Argonauts in the Heroic Age of Greek legend disappeared after Jason returned it to the Temple of Zeus in Orchomenos. Its actual nature and powers have been likewise occulted, but whether it grants True Kingship over the world, points the way to the Sacred City, allows the wearer to ascend to Heaven (or to Grand Mastership), or has some other transcendent effect, it remains an object of desire for the more strenuous-minded Cabalists. Traditionally, seeking the Fleece involves a long voyage, during which the questers must slay numerous deadly monsters. Leads are scanty, mostly centered around the ancient cities of the Amazons in the Ukraine and Libya.

4.3.1.2 The Holy Grail

Whole libraries, conversely, describe the Holy Grail and its quest, although its true nature and effects remain almost as hazy as those of the Fleece. Whether it is the Celtic Cauldron of Resurrection or the Cup of Christ, a drink from the Grail restores one's soul — or, for the baser Cabalist, grants immortality. The Grail may also involve marriage into (or drinking from, for vampires) a sacred bloodline. Even wilder theories hold that it is a piece of the emerald moon of the First Creation, an immortal child-homunculus born from the severed head of John the Baptist, or the egg of the emperor phoenix. Leads for the Grail quest (often an academic or spiritual journey) begin in Israel, southern France, or Glastonbury, England. (For more on the Grail, see pp. WT36–38; *GURPS Warehouse 23* also contains other questworthy objects such as the Ark of the Covenant and the Spear of Destiny.)

4.3.1.3 Prester John

The mysterious Cabalist whose machinations derailed the djinn (see sidebar, p. 00) entered medieval history as "Prester John," the "priest and king over fifty kings" in Further Asia. The number 50 (a coded reference to certain ancient Sumerian magical traditions) and the Hermetic phraseology "priest and king" lead most Cabalistic scholars to assume that Prester John was a very ancient Egyptian magus who went into hiding during one of the ancient Cabal upheavals — perhaps even during the rebellion of Khaibitu-na-Khonsu. His knowledge, power, and subtlety would be unmatched in that case — and he might very well have discovered the coveted secret of immortality. (Prester John may also be the legendary Fisher King who guards the Grail.) Cabalists, usually of the wilder-eyed and scruffier breed, have sought Prester John ever since he announced his existence to Pope Eugene III in 1145. His domain could be anywhere "east of Suez" — Ethiopia, Tibet, and Sumatra have all been considered potential starting places.

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4.3.2 Immortality

High-minded Cabalists will occasionally assure you that the Cabal's true work is perfecting magic and psionics to a point where humanity can achieve total immortality. Or, technically, to a point where *some* humans can achieve total immortality — the members of the Cabal. The psychological stress of reconciling the immense powers of the Cabal with the certain knowledge that every human Cabalist is mortal is not eased by the fact that many of those humans encounter immortals, or near-immortals, on a regular basis. Cabalists who think about this issue for too long quite often become unhinged. This does nothing to dissuade them.

Many Cabalists, especially the older and more desperate members, believe that *some* Cabal mages have discovered the key to immortality in the past. The Cabal's grimoires are ripe with hints of longevity elixirs and resurrection spells. Many Cabal Masters extend their life by centuries, hoping to live until the secret can be rediscovered. Other Cabal Masters of the past are mummified in preservation chambers in secret catacombs, awaiting resurrection. Mages specializing in necromancy are rumored to have already animated some of the ancient Masters, who now walk the Earth again, seeking the final key to restoring their lives.

4.3.2.1 The Fountain of Youth

Somewhere, goes the legend, there is a pure fountain granting eternal youth to the one who drinks from it. It may be the first water of Creation, or a spring of "living water" created by Moses or Christ, or simply a necessary wellspring to maintain the life of the Material Realm. The Roman god Jupiter supposedly transformed Juventas, goddess of youth, into a fountain and placed her in the "kingdom of Saturn." Ponce de Leon reportedly found the Fountain in Florida, but supposedly died of a poison arrow attack two years later. Other sources place it in Japan, or at the site of the Garden of Eden, itself a subject of some speculation.

4.3.2.2 The Philosopher's Stone

This substance, also known as the Red Elixir, True Cinnabar Tincture, Elixir Vitae, and other abstruse alchemical synonyms, is the ultimate spiritual quintessence of material existence. Ever since Zosimus of Alexandria postulated its existence in the fifth century A.D., alchemists within and outside the Cabal have sought its formula. The Stone's least interesting power is that of the transmutation of all elements — lead into gold, for example. It also cures all diseases, grants eternal life, conveys true knowledge of good and evil, and has even more amazing powers — it is essentially the concentrated essence of Re-Creation. The Cabal only knows of one alchemist who successfully created it: Nicolas Flamel, who disappeared from his Paris laboratory in 1418 at the age of 88, leaving his fortune to charity, and his pursuers at a complete loss. Occasionally, questers for the Stone decide to hunt down Flamel rather than pursue alchemical research. The ones who return remain empty-handed.

4.3.2.3 Transcendence

A few supremely arrogant yet unworldly Cabalists seek simply to transcend mortality — to become eikones, and then gods, themselves after death. Such Cabalists often start personality cults to ensure their postmortem worship, and then arrange a suitably mysterious and numinous departure from the mortal coil. These death scenes usually privilege drama over safety for bystanders and onlookers; noble self-sacrifice is far less common than massive conflagration.

4.3.3 The Hieropolis

An extension of sacred architecture (p. 00), the hieropolis is the "sacred city," entirely designed as a magical nexus. The Cabal built the first hieropolis, Akhetaton, around 1350 B.C., only to see it destroyed by the traditional priesthood before its true energies could be harnessed. Other hieropoleis include Solomon's Jerusalem, the Aztecs' blood-soaked Tenochtitlan, and Angkor Wat. Although hieropoleis can withstand (and empower) great magics, they tend to be vulnerable to, and even attract, besiegers and fires. The Cabal now tries to secretly lay out hieropolitan grids that focus power without attracting the attention of maleficent influences; Christopher Wren's London, Pierre L'Enfant's Washington, Baron Hausmann's Paris, and Daniel Burnham's Chicago have each succeeded in their way.

4.3.3.1 The Thaumarchy

An extension of the dream of Hieropolis is the "magical kingdom," or Thaumarchy. The geomantic theocracy of Egypt's Old Kingdom was the last known pure thaumarchy, although Minos' Crete may have been another — the Minoan evidence is frustratingly cloudy. The Egyptian thaumarchy descended from stores of knowledge (and possibly from bloodlines) passed down from before the Deluge; the Atlantean Sage-Kings ruled from a perfected Hieropolis within the greatest magical empire of all. Other sacred monarchies from Agammemnon's Mycenae to Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon to the Chinese and Japanese Empires may also derive from Atlantean models, but in practice they soon faded to mere shadows of the First Empire's true union of the temporal and spiritual.

Over the millennia since the fall of Old Egypt, many Cabalists and factions of Cabalists have attempted to build several thaumarchies. The most significant attempt came in the 14th century B.C., when the Cabal threw much of its effort into re-creating a "purified" Egyptian sorcerer kingdom under Akhenaton. Arthur's Britain and Merovingian France were two versions of the same idea, which both fell to rebellion and dissension. John Dee (p. 00) may, in fact, still be attempting to construct the sorcerous British Empire of his Arthurian dreams, as he tried to do under Elizabeth I. Rudolf II went mad before his Cabal supporters could carry out their plan with his Bohemia — although the word "Bohemian" became synonymous with anomalous, even occult, thinking. Other Cabalists attempted a neo-Egyptian solar kingship in Louis XIV's Versailles, with even more ambivalent results. The Masonic Revolution in France rapidly got out of hand, and the attempt by the Lodge of the Midwinter Aton (within the Thule Gesellschaft) to create an occult puppet regime in 1930s Germany spiraled into nearly total disaster. These varying projects, and their varying degrees of success and malleability, indicate that a truly magical kingdom might be something of a mixed blessing for the Cabal.

4.3.3.2 The Invisible Empire

This refractory quality to human politics (and its natural bent for jealous secrecy) causes the Cabal as a whole to pursue hidden, conspiratorial power. When individual Grand Masters feel it necessary (and can defend their reasoning to enough of their fellows to avoid exile), they twitch the veil aside to reveal the existence of an "Invisible Empire." However, this option has fallen into disrepute since the disaster of the Rosicrucian Revelation (p. 00). The Cabal now spreads rumors of the Invisible Empire through the occult or conspiratorial underground rather than openly flaunting their rule. This has all the advantages of publicly claiming the world's mystic turf — recruitment, rumor-mongering, reputation-building — with none of the drawbacks, such as forcing the Cabal's rivals to fight or back down openly. As a result, the Invisible Empire, as variously conceived, is essentially within the Cabal's grasp, although other priorities (such as exploring the Inner Realms) and Grand Master rivalries prevent them from finalizing the silent conquest of the world.

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4.3.4 History Is The Bunk

Between the Cabal's occult machinations, the Gates of Thoth, simple historical forgetfulness, and those pesky reality quakes, the GM should feel free to alter anything, or anywhen, he wishes. Whole stretches of history could be bland consensus constructed by later scholars trying to earn tenure, or carefully concealed scrimms erected by the Cabal to preserve some rich magical period from archaeological investigation. The history as given in this chapter (and in *GURPS Cabal* as a whole) assumes that conventional historians are broadly correct about the events of the past, but sadly mistaken as to those events' true significance, causes, and meaning. Even in that respect, the author has added Atlantis and a predynastic Egyptian civilization, and likely vastly overstated the roles of Queen Nitocris and King Arthur. GMs should eagerly spoon in any historical fictions, conspiracy theories, revisionist timelines from creation science to von DŠniken to Velikovsky, or half-remembered elements from Hollywood "sword-and-sandal" epics they wish — the object is fun and flavor, not academic accuracy. Similarly, if the GM wishes to change, modify, delete, or improve upon any of the explanations or Cabal personalities given in this sourcebook, he should do so without a second thought. However, within the game itself, a *GURPS Cabal* campaign probably functions most smoothly if time has a functioning Observer Effect (p. TT45) and possibly a Recency Effect (p. TT42) to remove player temptation to "fix last week."

4.3.5 Djinn Battles

Para-elementals of Heat (p. 00), the long-lived djinn remain consistent enemies of the Cabal. In the antediluvian era, the djinn ruled over a mighty empire centered on Irem of the Pillars in the Arabian wetlands. As their lands desiccated, they moved outward and began competing with the Egyptians for the same territories and magical resources. When the Cabal entered the picture, they quickly became rivals. The great Cabalist King Solomon dealt the djinn a fearsome blow around 970 B.C.; this strike may have been what destroyed Irem and forced the djinn into their City of Brass on the borderland between the Libyan desert and Yetzirah. (The City of Brass also connects to both elemental planes of Air and Fire, as well as to other cities throughout the Realms.)

Since then, the djinn have made a number of sallies back into the Material Realm, initially during their long war against Cabalist Rome. After the Cabal's disintegration in the 3rd and 4th centuries, the djinn took a leaf from their foes and attempted to create their own sorcerous empire in the palmy *Arabian Nights* era of the Umayyad and Abbasid Caliphates. Using vast magical energies, they almost succeeded in punching Baghdad through the Veil and into Assiah, Yetzirah, and Briah simultaneously. But in 1228, the mysterious Cabalist Grand Master known as Prester John diverted the Mongol hordes through the djinn empire and leveled their terrestrial cities while the Cabalist Templars distracted the para-elementals in Palestine and Egypt.

While the Cabal rebuilt during the Renaissance (using, ironically, magical texts translated and preserved by the djinn's human scribes), the djinn also regrouped, taking a stranglehold on the Ottoman Turks. The Cabal parried the three djinn thrusts into Europe in 1529, 1571, and 1683, and then went on the offensive. With Napoleon as their stalking horse, the Cabal wrested its ancestral home in Egypt away from the djinn in 1798, and spent the next two centuries battering them back into their desert fastnesses. Russian and British Lodges struck deep into Central Asia, playing a Great Game against the djinn for the lost lore of the Silk Road's ancient cities. In this century, two World Wars, four Arab-Israeli Wars, and the Gulf conflict have all covered, reflected, or been sucked into the struggle between the djinn and the Cabal. Although the Cabal has managed to extend a thin scrim of modernity over the Middle East, it knows there is no end to the ancient contest with these haunters of the Arabian nightmare.

4.3.6 Christ?

The devout (if occasionally heretical) Christianity of many Renaissance Cabalists has colored the Cabal's official history of the time of Jesus. Which prophecies, omens, and oracles are accurate records of Jesus' life, and which are pious frauds, cannot easily be determined. The Archangels aren't telling. No Gates of Thoth have opened into the period between 8 B.C. and 47 A.D. in the last three centuries, but that could just be a coincidence. As to Jesus' role in Cabalistic history, the three most common theories hold that he was an Egyptian Inner Circle Master betrayed in a struggle over Cabal policy, that he was a Jewish rabbi deranged by the djinn, or that he was the Son of God. Loudly promulgating any of these hypotheses (or any other, really) remains an excellent way to start a fight, and barring ground-breaking research, the topic remains tacitly taboo.

4.3.7 The Hell-Fire Club

Between 1719 and 1766, at various locations in and near London, a group of debauched libertines — many of them high government officials — met as the Hell-Fire Club to carry out drunken revels involving prostitutes dressed as nuns. Although the Club itself was secret, and its orgies open only by invitation (which is how Benjamin Franklin joined them in 1757), it concealed a still darker purpose. The true goal of the Hell-Fire Club was to graft demonic rule onto Great Britain and open the way between Britain and the Abyss. The orthodox history of the Cabal says that the Amonis Albioni and the Apis' Crosses Lodges together smashed the Club during the Wilkes scandal of 1763 — but its Grand Master, Sir Francis Dashwood, lived until 1781 and remained in the British government the whole time. Many prominent Amonis Albioni Cabalists joined the Club, ostensibly as infiltrators — but who, precisely, was infiltrating whom?

4.3.8 Francis Barrett

In 1801, one Francis Barrett of Marylebone, London, published a redaction (even a plagiarism) of Agrippa and the works of the alchemist von Helmont as *The Magus, or the Celestial Intelligencer*. The Cabal has never determined who "Barrett" was, or what his motives were in revealing Cabalistic lore (even in such an obliquely distorted fashion) to the world. Barrett claimed to be a Rosicrucian adept, and advertised for "no more than 12" students in his book. Theories of Barrett's true identity range from one of John Dee's tools, to a counter-magic operative of the British government, to a "true Rosicrucian" entity sent by one or another eikone to recruit followers.

4.3.9 The Golden Dawn

One of the most influential and gifted magical societies in Cabal history, the Golden Dawn shows both the potential and the danger of high-level collaboration among Inner Circle members. During the 1880s, William Wynn Westcott and S. L. MacGregor Mathers, two Cabalists of Practitioner grade, developed a unified set of ritual and theory that greatly expanded the range of Hermetic magic by relinking it with kabbalism, theoretical alchemy, and the Tarot. In 1888, they founded the Isis-Urania Lodge to explore this newly discovered lore, which they claimed came to them from a cipher manuscript of the "Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn." Using their Golden Dawn rituals, Mathers and Westcott quickly advanced to Master grade, and attracted other Cabalists of high level including William Butler Yeats, Florence Farr, A.E. Waite, and Aleister Crowley.

The larger Golden Dawn system soon encompassed at least five Lodges, and the magical insights it held seemingly allowed its members as great an advantage over other Cabalists as the Cabal's Hermetic secrets granted it over outside

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magicians. Some observers (among them Erasmus Rooke, who never overtly joined the Golden Dawn) predicted that the Golden Dawn would supersede the Cabal, ushering in the twentieth century of magic and wonder. Unfortunately (or, perhaps, fortunately) Crowley, Yeats, and Mathers could not agree on the Golden Dawn's proper course. Crowley wished to use the new lore to colonize Daath and gain complete knowledge and power over the Abyss, using Daath as a stronghold to conquer either Assiah or Atziluth or both. Yeats wished to use Fa'rie as a bridge, reintegrate Yetzirah with Assiah, and recapitulate the First Creation in the new age. Mathers simply wanted to become a powerful Grand Master and rule the Cabal as it already existed.

The Golden Dawn ciphers and rituals became the key to power, and the three fought over them so avidly that they splintered their Lodges, breaking up the Golden Dawn in 1900. Rooke and other Grand Masters contained the rivalry short of overt explosion by threatening to expel and then hunt down any Cabalist who unleashed sorcerous warfare in the heart of Victorian London. The inner core of Golden Dawn knowledge remained inaccessible when the cipher manuscripts vanished in 1904, although Crowley published some of the Golden Dawn secrets in 1909. By now, although Cabal researchers have built on many of the Golden Dawn's insights, its brief dream of a new dawn of magic in the world remains safely obscure.

4.3.10 Dr. Selden Graves

When FBI profilers discover evidence of ritual magic use in a serial killer's basement, they pass the files to "a Bureau cult specialist." When CIA assets notice Egyptian terrorist cells stealing magical papyri from provincial museums, the Director routes the reports to "the relevant assessment desk." When Navy sonar buoys pick up Phoenician chanting at the edge of the Marianas Trench, the ONI kicks the data upstairs to "the Pentagon freak team." All of those destinations are the same: the cramped, book-stuffed office of Dr. Selden Graves, in a sub-basement annex of the Smithsonian Institution.

Looking into Dr. Graves' official records takes a surprisingly high security clearance, and they begin only with 1945 and a personnel jacket with the AEC. Throughout the 1950s, Graves consulted for the Air Force and FBI, and he received an appointment as Special Assistant to the President in 1963 — an appointment that has never been rescinded, or resigned. At that point, his records become even blander and less informative. He remains on the payroll of the Department of Energy, although his office budget shows up on no Congressionally-approved appropriation. Physically, Graves appears to be a stoop-shouldered, sunken-cheeked man of 65, with iron-gray hair cut very short, a bristling mustache, and a worn tweed topcoat. Only his deep bass voice and piercing violet eyes (often concealed behind tinted horn-rimmed glasses) mark him as any different from the legion of civil servants thronging the capital.

Those members of the Cabal who know this much suspect that Graves is the U.S. government's top expert on magic, the occult, and the paranormal. He seems to have had little formal involvement with, or direction of, the Air Force's UFO investigations, the Army's "remote viewing" programs, or similar projects in the last few decades. More annoyingly, he also seems to have had little formal involvement with the Cabal — and Cabalists' magical attempts at surveillance of, interference with, or attacks on Graves have uniformly failed. Some of the Cabalists involved have themselves come under assault, only occasionally from *official* government or law enforcement circles; these attacks have a considerably higher success rate. Whether Graves is a powerful Grand Master hiding out (or playing a solo game), a skilled psi (perhaps a mutant), or some other type of supernatural entity remains an open question. This uncertainty about Graves' true identity, powers, and goals contributes to most Cabalists' reluctance to attract official attention of any kind.

4.3.11 Cairo

With its unmatched access to the Pyramids and Sphinx, priceless stores of Arabic manuscripts and Egyptian lore, and historical (and magical) resonances, Cairo remains the indispensable headquarters of the Cabal despite its dangerous position as an island in djinn country. The djinn, Islamic Brotherhood anti-magical terror squads, and general urban disturbance make up only part of the danger of Cairo. Cabal activities here take place in the kind of hothouse political environment common to any powerful capital, from the Beltway to Moscow to the Vatican. Every faction, every Grand Master, every magical interest group or eikonic cult, has its representatives in Cairo jockeying for power and influence. Magical and alchemical researchers flock to Cairo to utilize its mystical libraries and Cabal archives, both within and outside the Black School (see sidebar, p. 00). Most of the Cabal's rival societies (see sidebar, p. 00) have covert bases, spy networks, and safe houses in Cairo, to keep tabs on Cabal activities — as do major "mortal" intelligence agencies from the CIA to Mossad to the FSB.

Finally, Cairo is only ten miles downriver from Memphis, the ancient capital of Pharaonic Egypt, and lies in the middle of a rough triangle between Memphis, Heliopolis, and Giza. Excavation and construction in Cairo uncover more and more Egyptian artifacts and ruins every year. Cairo's museums and universities also hold thousands of Egyptian antiquities, as do the private collections of powerful Cairenes, both Cabalists and outsiders. Any of these items can potentially trigger long-dead magical powers, raising the dead, calling down avatars of the dessicated Egyptian gods, or interfering with magic in unpredictable fashion. And, of course, if the Cabal can survive down the millennia since the fall of Egypt, so could its ancient enemies, the priests of the Egyptian gods. Even in the teeming streets of its capital, the Cabal is not safe from its past.

4.3.12 What About China?

The alert reader will have noted that the Mystical Secrets of the Uttermost East are given relatively short shrift in this book. The Cabal doesn't pay east Asia much attention, and the Han deities and their attendants in the Dragon Court in Bria return the favor, secure in their splendid isolation. The relative paucity of Chinese influence on the Cabal can be explained in a number of ways, which the GM may wish to choose among, should it become an issue:

The Cabal is lazy: This, certainly, is Dr. Fang's theory (p. 00). The Cabal, arising as it did in its Eurocentric milieu, never paid enough attention to the few magically-aware reports that came back from the East. Nobody really knows or understands what's going on in Asia, because learning Chinese mystical theory is an even bigger headache than learning Hermetic magic, especially if you have to learn to read Chinese first. So, it's easier just to assume that it doesn't really matter to the Big Picture, and occasionally loot the odd Chinese temple when you can. So far, it hasn't been critical, since whatever magical powers exist in China haven't looked outside their borders since the Mongol invasion.

The Cabal is hoodwinked: There is, in fact, a powerful magical conspiracy in China, and it has successfully fooled the Cabal into believing that it does not exist. A few Cabalists — Matteo Ricci, Sax Rohmer, Edmund Backhouse — saw the truth, but they were silenced or suborned. The goals, methods, and even the true identity of the Chinese conspiracy remain unknown. Some suspects might include a conclave of Chinese supernaturals, the White Lotus or another mystical Triad society, the peaceful masters of Shangri-La, or the fiendish Si-Fan of Rohmer's "fictions."

The Cabal is correct: In the grand scheme of things, China doesn't really matter. Its individual Taoist alchemists, feng shui masters, or mystical martial artists may be quite competent in their own field, or on their home turf. They have even

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been capable of running China in the past; during the T'ang and Ming dynasties, for example. However, the Manchu invasion, followed by the Taiping rebellion, World War II, and the Cultural Revolution have fragmented China's supernatural community and destroyed much valuable knowledge.

The Cabal is even more correct than they know: China got onto the wrong track very early. Its first magical system, the Eight Trigrams, allowed some small-scale magics, but didn't have the potential power that Egyptian, and later Hermetic, magic possessed. A few Chinese arts function on a very local level, but they're akin to Aristotelian physics — rigorous, but wrong. The five Chinese elements don't accurately describe the decanic world, Chinese astrology is the kind of intuitive guesswork most mortals believe Hermetic astrology to be, and the more elaborate Chinese magic became, the less it corresponded with true magical theory. Without the central insights taken from the ancient Egyptians and systematized by the Cabal in the last 500 years, China just can't compete.

4.3.13 Elizabethan London

Thanks to John Dee's machinations, a knot of probabilities surrounds Elizabethan London. Through the Grand Master's occult dramaturgy, Tudor England's plays, poetry, court masques, songs, and madrigals have woven an immense skein of event horizons, waking dreams, and archetypal happenstance throughout history. Dee may even have tugged that history askew with such strings, slowly moving toward his unguessable ultimate purpose. (Cabalists opposed to Dee whisper the story that a book-collecting member of the Wheel of Ptah Lodge owns a crumbling copy of Suetonius' *Twelve Caesars* that describes Julius Caesar's assassination — by Mark Antony.) The "wide gap of time" he has opened throughout the twisting cobblestoned streets of 16th century Europe's biggest city has peculiar resonances from North Carolina to ancient Stonehenge to Arkhangelsk on the Arctic coast. Cabalists in London sometimes find themselves time-drifting toward Dee's decades — and those who have balked John Dee in the past sometimes never return from it.

4.3.14 GURPS Cyberworld

For the GM who wishes to constrain player characters' explorations of the future, *GURPS Cyberworld* is made to order. Its ruthless political-economic controls, social (and biological) plagues, low-intensity brigandage, and activist "anti-occult" NERCC stormtroopers not only make traveling to the future extremely dangerous, but virtually pointless. In the aftermath of the Tolliver's Disease epidemic and the Grand Slam, finding information or leverage on a present-day foe is almost impossible, and most advanced technology is restricted to either members of defined criminal undergrounds or government agencies. The GM can increase the danger level still further by giving NERCC a reliable mana-detector or other "secret technomagic" to use against time-tripping Cabalists unsatisfied with the palmtop computers or submachine guns of the (relatively) benign present day.

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When the roaring stopped, Brian slowly removed the hood, squinting under the brilliant azure sky.

The thick, moist mud squelched between his toes and quickly extinguished the flames around his feet; the glyphs that transported him to this place — wherever, and whatever, it was — were now uninformative ashes sticking to his sweaty legs in the heat.

"The next test is simple," Awbrey Neale had informed Brian an hour ago, after administering the formal oaths in sonorous ancient Egyptian. "Return to this chamber alive, and your Theorist's rank is confirmed."

As Brian looked around, he saw only the low ridge of muddy hills behind him, and a dark shoal sticking out of the water about fifty yards ahead. He must be on a tidal flat somewhere. The sharp saline stink in his nostrils told him it was an ocean; the sun, burning overhead, told him he needed shelter.

"Dr. Dee has taken quite a shine to you, boy." Neale had murmured, not quite showing his fangs as he scrawled a quick row of letters in Brian's blood, and licking the excess off his talon-tip.

Brian hadn't been able to get a glimpse of the plane-shifting scroll then, and as a rill of seawater turned the ashes on his feet to sludge, he knew he wouldn't be able to reconstruct it, either. Neale had probably counted on that; he thought Brian a notably unnecessary addition to Dee's faction.

"He'll be quite pleased to see you return, I can assure you." Neale's remembered voice echoed in Brian's thoughts as he looked around — had that crag been quite so tall before? And was the low beach he stood on moving, or was the tide coming in?

"You see," Neale had said, as he lit the scroll from a rosewood brand, "he's very interested to find out where this particular plane is, exactly. And why nobody has come back from it, yet."

Brian scabbled back on the rise — yes, it was sinking, and yes, that promontory was rising. And then he felt the scales under the mud under his feet, and saw the crag slowly turn toward him, and resolve into an enormous mud- and weed-covered skull.

As the leviathan opened its jaws, and Brian felt the seawater lapping at his groin, he thought he could tell Dee the answer to that second question.

Although the membership of the Cabal has resources conventional organizations lack, the Cabal itself has no special immunity from the sociological axioms that govern any group, especially groups both secretive and powerful. Such groups universally become corrupt, abandon group long-term aims for the leaders' short-term advantage, and fall victim either to a superior organization that fills the same social niche or to internal disputes that sunder unity, squander power, and eventually create rivals from within.

Fortunately, most Cabalists care little about the "corruption of power" — in fact, for some of them, said corruption is the entire reason for power in the first place. Since the Cabal has no higher ideology, its ideals can remain situational and

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pragmatic rather than unrealistic or inflexible. The long-term aims of the Cabal — secrecy, power, knowledge — match the short-term interests of the leadership, and indeed those of almost every Cabalist from the lowest to the highest level. This leaves only external attack or internal strife as fundamental sources of weakness; the Cabal's broad base allows it to co-opt almost any potential rival, and its centuries-old power base allows it to crush or deter the rest. Internal struggle did, in fact, nearly behead the Cabal during the Middle Ages. Many of the current Grand Masters ascended to their current positions shortly after that turmoil, a consideration that causes them to stay their hands now — why should they upset the apple cart and allow their own hard-won positions to be usurped? Also, the essential conservatism of much magical lore and the not insignificant benefits derived from continuity and secrecy keep modern inter-Cabal competition at a steady, but low, boil. For now.

5.1 The Structure of the Cabal

In theory, Cabalists advance in rank as they gain in magical knowledge and skill. The eight ranks of the Cabal each carry an assumed level of competence and power, and represent layers of deception that must be overcome before arriving at the central truth. Cabalists of a given rank know certain recognition codes, secret hand signals, and so forth by which they can recognize any other Cabalist and determine rank. (Lying about one's rank tends to dangerously annoy Cabalists whose rank you have usurped. It's not done as often as it might be.) In theory, lower-level members must obey higher-level members requesting legitimate Cabal business; in practice, power flows from master to pupil and from recruiter to initiate. Individual contacts, in other words, serve as the connectors in the Cabal's table of organization.

Cabal ranks are further divided into three *circles* corresponding to general areas of operation, comfort, and knowledge. Individual patrons and Masters may advance their protégés in rank for political ends or to fill holes in their organization; advancing into a new Circle, however, is serious business since a Cabalist of a higher Circle must face considerably steeper obstacles. The dangers of the magical ecology, in other words, keep Cabalistic grade inflation to a minimum. Since induction into a higher Circle marks a real and significant change in challenge and responsibility, the initiations for Grades 4 and 7 (Theorist and Master) involve esoteric rituals of increasing complexity and magical strain. A Cabalist who seeks advancement across Circle boundaries without the necessary degree of understanding or power can easily die during these initiations. Most Cabalists never reach the Inner Circle, and very few indeed reach the innermost grade, Grand Master, or Magister Ipsissimus.

Despite the ordered appearance of the Cabal, it is not always a united group. Political power struggles often occur within Lodges, and inter-Lodge rivalry is also common. Middle and Inner Circle Cabalists often have their own individual goals, desires, and thirsts for power — and these can conflict, manifesting either as covert backstabbing or long-running vendetta. There are no formal rules governing intramember rivalry — even murder is not restricted, as long as it is done out of the public eye. Since all-out magical war is difficult to practice out of the public eye, the Grand Masters keep a lid on it — although in unsettled, distant areas, or times of war and chaos, the duels of Cabalists can and do spill onto earthly battlefields without alerting the outside world.

5.1.1 Who Can Be A Member

Cabal membership requires only two things: the good opinion of an existing Cabalist, and a knowledge of, and ability to use, the paranormal. In practice, either of those two requirements, in sufficient degree, seems to be sufficient. A Cabalist who comes to trust and rely upon a mortal will reveal at least a portion of the mysteries to him, if only to make communication easier. These retainers, allies, and hangers-on have an informal degree of Cabal protection under the

"umbrella" of the actual Cabalist. Conversely, of course, the forces working against the Cabal (or against that individual Cabalist) consider such allies legitimate (and usually easy) targets — again, reason for the Cabalist to give his clients sufficient information to protect themselves, and by extension, him.

On the other hand, the powerful magician or supernatural being who seemingly springs from nowhere and demands to be initiated at some high rank is a common experience for older, Inner Circle Cabalists. On the principle that it's better to have powerful magic inside the Cabal rather than outside, such requests find a surprisingly positive reception. Even human scholars who have developed tremendous knowledge of the magical Realms through research (or human information-brokers who have developed such knowledge through chains of gossip and investigation) have joined the Cabal without ever demonstrating magical talents. Such Cabalists cannot leave the Outer Circles without actually performing magic, but their extensive mundane resources and knowledge base often makes them trusted advisers to high-degree Cabalists — and potential powers behind the throne.

5.1.2 Ultors and Passers

With their long history of persecution, Cabal members have developed a system of mutual protection. It began as simple tit-for-tat political vendetta, but during the chaos of the Dark Ages, such measures threatened to involve the whole Cabal in petty blood feuds. The Grand Master Garravin developed the system in place today. Each member of the Cabal has two other contacts, his ultors, (from the Latin *ultorae*, "avengers") normally from within his Circle, though not necessarily at the same level. He is their passer (from the Latin *passer*, "sparrow," from the Biblical injunction that "not a sparrow shall fall without God's knowledge"). He, in turn, selects two other Cabalists to be his passers, and for whom he acts as ultor, usually once he has reached Novice or Adept rank. Usually, a Cabalist's two ultors know each other and have mutually selected their passer, but not always. If an ultor dies, the surviving ultor picks a new one.

This means that each member is looked after by two Cabalists and must watch out for two others. When a Cabalist is suspected of being in trouble (for instance, by vanishing without explanation), his ultors follow up on his activities and whereabouts and attempt to uncover any foul play. If a member is attacked or murdered for mundane reasons (burglary, crimes of passion, etc.), the Cabal will (usually) leave matters to the police, although they will often make sure the guilty are punished. If, however, the ultors deem that the member was persecuted or attacked by supernatural forces, or because of his supernatural nature or abilities, the full powers of the Cabal will be brought to bear.

If the member was attacked by a fellow Cabalist, the ultors bring the attack to the attention of higher-level members, who judge whether it was justified by a sorcerous duel or declared vendetta. Many Inner Circle members of the Cabal have quite Darwinian notions of their inferiors' rights; they primarily judge the legitimacy of inter-Cabal attacks by whether the attack risked the exposure of the Cabal. The ultors can appeal the judgement up the ranks all the way to a Grand Master — although they run the risk of vanishing themselves, if they offend suitably powerful Cabalists in the process. A Grand Master's decision is final, although it may create a grudge or political problems for him.

This can be reflected in play if the GM is using a Cabalist as an NPC. If the players do away with such a character because he is a vampire, sorcerer or some such creature, the GM should decide how long it will take for the Cabal to respond. This will usually be several weeks, during which time the ultors will investigate the situation. The GM can then bring them into the campaign as NPCs, making life difficult for the PCs either magically or psionically. The degree of response depends on the degree of persecution — if the PCs killed the Cabalist, then his ultors may try to do away with them as well.

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The GM should not abuse the ultor system. Despite their supernatural powers, Cabalists are not omnipotent and (in a well-balanced campaign) will often be as limited in their options as the PCs. If retaliation involves murder or some other serious felony, the Cabalists will be discreet — if that is impossible, they will choose a less severe action. Generally, the more powerful the Cabalist, the more powerful are his ultors. If the PCs do away with an Initiate or Novice, they will not receive a great degree of retaliation — perhaps little more than a goat's head on their doorstep, which should at least spook them a bit.

5.1.3 Outer Circle

The Outer Circle, corresponding to Assiah, deals with things of this world; Outer Circle members remain fairly focused on temporal power and learning. Many higher-level Cabalists prefer to keep Outer Circle members ignorant of the existence of upper ranks within the Cabal. The most common "false flag" for an Outer Circle is that of some other mystically-minded or magical organization, such as a chapter of the Golden Dawn, a local Freemasonic lodge, a New Age study group, a Wiccan coven, or even an occult-debunking society. The general Cabalistic term for such a front group is a Lodge.

The standard Cabalistic lodge carries between 10 and 20 members, led by an Adept (referred to as the Lodge Master). Each lodge has its own name, traditionally one reflective of Egyptian mythology. Many lodges have both an inner, Cabal, name and an outer, public name: the Claws of Sekhmet, for example, lies within the Thelema Society of suburban Phoenix, Arizona. Many of these cover groups have their own system of degrees (the Masons, for example, traditionally have 33 degrees; the Golden Dawn has ten), which has little or no relevance to true Cabalists. Of the 50 members of the Church of the Martian Jerusalem in Thurlow, Oklahoma, only 10 Cabalists within it make up the Horus-of-the-Horizon Society. And the true leader, the Adept, masquerades as the Church's choir director rather than its Planetary Radiant Leader. In other, even more paranoid, Lodges, the true Adept often bides his time as a seemingly ordinary, low-grade member, parishioner, or cultist.

Cover lodges may meet as often or as infrequently as their leader wishes, but in normal circumstances, a Cabalistic lodge meets about twice a month to maintain identity, to perform any needed rituals, and to exchange information about occult phenomena. New members can be initiated at the regular meetings, or in special initiation ceremonies, at the Adept's discretion.

5.1.3.1 Initiate (*Initium*)

Membership in the Cabal is open to anyone displaying supernatural talents, regardless of race, sex, species, or religion. The only other requirement is a Cabalist's invitation. This usually requires the Cabalist to know and trust the would-be Initiate. A Cabalist who recruits a promising or useful member can count on favorable attention (and a possible promotion of his own) from his patrons and superiors; one who recruits a weakling or an incompetent can expect to remain in the lower grades rather longer. A Cabalist who recruits a mole or a traitor, of course, can count on a messy death. Thus, deciding to recruit an outsider into the Cabal can be a very long process. However, many candidates are recruited from within other secret societies, which will usually not take as much time and often gives the recruiter an opportunity to judge the candidate's capacity for secrecy and obedience. Once the member feels that the candidate is ready for the Cabal, he will reveal the existence of the organization to him (portraying it merely as a local lodge, or as a splinter group of the cover lodge) and will ask if he wishes to become an Initiate. If the candidate declines, nothing further will happen. The candidate will be left with the impression that the Cabal is little more than a social group, or a

malcontent faction. Candidates accepting the offer will be told to "prepare themselves" by attempting to understand their own powers.

The initiation ceremony itself is a fairly simple one, reminiscent of Masonic and other secret society initiations. Adepts often tell members recruited from other such societies that Masonic rituals, for example, are corruptions, descendants, or shadows of the unthinkable ancient Cabalistic traditions. (In fact, the Cabal developed both sets of rites over the same period of time, and consciously designed the seeming hints and remnants of ancient wisdom into those exoteric rituals.) The blindfolded would-be Initiate must step into the Lodge chapel, at the seeming risk of death (a knife at the throat is traditional) and answer questions posed by the robed and hooded Lodge Master. The Cabalist who recruited the new member prompts him in the appropriate responses. Following the ritual questions, the Lodge Master administers a blood-freezing oath of silence, which is often an actual Oath spell (p. G77). Once sworn, the newly-fledged Initiate then removes his blindfold, usually to see something completely unexpected — a different chapel from the "overt" one, an Egyptian sarcophagus in a corporate boardroom, or their own blood on the knife. Often, the Initiate will see a friend, acquaintance, or celebrity — one he had no reason to think a Lodge member — robed in the audience or on the dais. (If such a person isn't handy, most Lodges wouldn't cavil at a little judicious magical or psionic disguise work.) This reinforces the notion that the Cabal is everywhere, and that the Initiate should likewise keep his friends unsuspecting of his secret life.

Most new Initiates receive only nominal tasks designed to test their loyalty and discover any aptitudes they may possess. Their recruiter remains their sponsor within the Lodge, and often winds up as one of their ultors (p. 00). After a spell of courier duty or research, however, the Initiate's sponsor or another Lodge member will begin bringing him along on their own missions or projects as a kind of apprenticeship. Should the Initiate show proper respect, ability, and initiative, the road will lay open to rapid advancement — the Cabal needs skilled operatives that it can trust.

5.1.3.2 Novice (*Novus*)

The initiation rite for a Novice closely resembles that of an Initiate: hoodwink, knife, questions, and another litany of oaths. Some Lodges throw another curve ball at the incoming Novice, to keep him off balance. The ordeal may change from a knife to a sudden drop or a wall of fire; the questions may include one "ringer" to make the respondent sweat a little (usually a classic riddle that the Initiate should have encountered in his previous researches); the chapel might have changed location again.

Novices get the work piled on; they must simultaneously hone their own supernatural skills (the Lodge does its best to hook Novices up with suitable trainers), investigate rumors, learn Lodge organization and rules and traditions, and jump to follow Adepts or visiting Middle Circle members on missions and short-term research fellowships. Almost any job that requires Cabal attention on Assiah and relatively little supernatural firepower gets dumped on a Novice or a team of Novices. Simple assassinations, thefts, surveillance, and courier work fall into these categories. Many Novices wind up sent on "threat assessment" missions to determine if a problem demands a larger-scale response. If the problem proves serious, and any Novices survive to report it, they will often accompany the higher-ranking team sent back to take care of it as the on-scene experts. By the second year of a Novitiate, a Novice usually knows for sure that the world is not what it seems. He's ready to move up — or he's sent out on more threat assessments until he is.

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5.1.3.3 Adept (*Adeptus*)

A Novice who his ultors and his Lodge Master agree shows promise gets groomed for Adeptship. The Lodge Master begins working closely with such a Novice, teaching him the ropes of running a cell in a magical conspiracy. Any Novice being considered for Adeptship will have already twigged to the fact that there's more to the Cabal than just this one Lodge; the Adept's job is to reveal as much of the truth as the Novice can handle. The object is to keep the new Adept humble and cooperative, but also to offer tantalizing glimpses of the power and options open to the loyal Cabalist. Some Lodge Masters bring suitable Novices into Adeptship as soon as possible, so that they can move on themselves. Others keep the "partnership" phase of their work going as long as practicable, either out of reluctance to turn over a comfortable Lodge or out of concern that the would-be Adept needs "just a little more training" before he's ready for the real challenge of running a Lodge. Either way, initiation into the Adept degree is often pro forma and relatively hurried.

New Adepts either need to take over their Lodge (a process that may involve an elaborate cover story for the other members) or found a new one. Both have their challenges; outgoing Lodge Masters never seem to have told the new Adept everything about the job. Old enemies, debts, and plans resurface, and the other members of the Lodge take the change in leadership as a cue to re-establish the political pecking order. Founding a new Lodge requires organizational skills, a reliable source of income (the number of problems that money can solve is truly amazing, even to sorcerers and vampires), and a membership base that promises talented recruits but no power struggles. Either way, Lodges must perform missions for upper-circle members, work on whatever sort of supernatural investigation seems most rewarding at the moment, keep a lid on the paranormal in their own area, and provide their Middle Circle chiefs with a steady stream of reports, funding, and (when requested) magical resources.

5.1.4 Middle Circle

The Middle Circle, corresponding to Yetzirah, is the real workhorse of the membership; there never seem to be enough competent Cabalists of these ranks for every task the Masters need accomplished. Cabalists of the Middle Circle can expect to be given an immense range of assignments, projects, curricula, and so on. Since Middle Circle Cabalists must respond to such a wide variety of tasks, they usually remain outside any formal Lodge structure. Many Middle Circle Cabalists don't even have a permanent base of operations, working out of whatever location is most convenient for the mission at hand.

Ceremonies of Middle and Inner Circle induction are far more demanding. Magic, drugs, and other forms of consciousness-altering are employed, and the candidate is usually pushed to the limits of his stamina and will. As a member progresses inward, he gains more magical and/or psionic powers, and learns more truths about the Cabal, including its ultimate goals (which the member may or may not like!). Middle and Inner Circle members are rarely involved with lodges; rather, they work secretly on magical or psionic research and practice, or become involved in the Cabal's field operations and political maneuvers.

5.1.4.1 Theorist (*Theoria*)

Initiation into the fourth degree is rigorously controlled and harshly executed. Only Adepts who have shown both the discipline to succeed in their earthly duties and the drive to exceed them get tapped for recruitment into the Middle Circle. This initiation usually represents a true death-ritual; the potential Theorist must be able to survive stresses that would kill a lesser being. By this point, although the actual induction ceremonies and oaths remain constant, the proctors

must personally target the tests and trials to the candidate's weaknesses. A human magus might be buried alive in a ghoulish–haunted cemetery, while a ghoulish Cabalist might be starved for a week and then sent into Grand Central Station to quietly kill one policeman without drawing attention.

The key, and common, element is the nearly–fatal test. Upper level Cabalists (usually Philosophers getting ready to make a bid for Mastership) recruit candidates for Theorist to serve them in crucial areas that mere Adepts can't handle. Since the tester's life will usually depend on the candidate's reliability and skills, the tester has no incentive to go easy on a favored pupil; rather, the opposite is true.

Theorists, as their title implies, spend virtually all their time studying the vital lore and information needed to succeed in the Middle Circle. Although most Adepts have already learned something of the true nature of the Realms, and the extent of the Cabal's potential power, the Theorist must know as much as possible of both to be worth using. Much of this learning consists of on–the–job training. A Theorist (or a group of newly fledged Theorists) may be sent to explore some remote corner of the Astral Realm, accompany a diplomatic mission to a deity's court in Briah, or serve as the hard core of a Cabalistic counterstrike against the Pavane of Vampires in Calcutta. Thus, they learn astral geography, eikonic law, and sorcerous tactics. Theorists also spend much of their time networking, trying to make connections in as many other branches of the Cabal as possible. This not only increases their access to new or exciting magical techniques, but also increases their chance of catching the eye of a superior looking for able help.

5.1.4.2 Practitioner (*Prattein*)

Once a Theorist has suitably mastered the basic knowledge of his field (and usually branched out into other allied fields of study), he becomes a useful tool for high–level action by one or another Inner Circle member. Occasionally, even a Philosopher who sees real promise and aptitude in a given Theorist may mark him out for advancement to Practitioner as a protégé, although this runs the risk of seeing the protégé outstrip the would–be mentor and get cherry–picked by a Cabalist of yet higher level.

The rites of initiation into this degree are almost a formality; the key element of becoming a Practitioner is the Practitioner's Gift. Each candidate must promise a Gift to his sponsor into the new rank. Although the Practitioner often suggests the Gift, it must be formally assigned by the sponsor. A would–be Practitioner who repeatedly rejects the assignment of a Gift can find it very difficult to get another sponsor; they usually wind up questing for some item or object so powerful that any Inner Circle Cabalist would gladly accept it as a Gift. Gifts may be anything from the traditional ten labors to the head of his sponsor's greatest enemy or the secret to some puzzling bit of magical lore. When the Practitioner completes the Gift, whatever it is, he may then be advanced to the Philosopher degree.

Ambitious Practitioners often find their progress slowed down by the need to fulfill the arcane, tedious, or downright hazardous requirements for their Gift. This is normally no accident. On the other hand, promising (or well–connected) Practitioners may find their Gift to be either simple (a year and a day of service) or even in their own interest (John Dee often requires his favored Practitioners to master some arcane magic as their Gift to him). The death of one's sponsor transfers the Gift obligation to the sponsor's ultors; if title remains unclear, any Grand Master can reassign a Gift if need be.

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5.1.4.3 Philosopher (*Philosophus*)

Cabalists who attain the Philosopher degree do so by presenting their Gift to their sponsor, and then undergoing the necessary rituals and ceremonies for the degree. It is traditional for a Cabalist's ultors to attend this induction, as it marks the formal independence of a Cabalist. After attaining the Philosopher grade, a Cabalist is not obligated to obey the instructions or summons of any other Cabalist except his fellow ultor in case their passer needs their assistance.

Philosophers are expected, therefore, to set their own agendas, to seek out problems and solve them, to perform feats of research and scholarship, and to use their own initiative. Many Philosophers begin recruiting their own lower-degree networks and teams of operatives to aid in these pet projects. An unambitious Philosopher can stay at that rank for the rest of his existence, as the Cabal sees no reason to add to the number of ambitious supernatural beings clamoring for leadership roles. An ambitious Philosopher, of course, must find a Master or Grand Master to offer initiation into the Inner Circle.

5.1.5 Inner Circle

The Inner Circle corresponds with Briah, the Iconic Plane, and the members of the Cabal who reach this level do, indeed, direct and reflect matters in the lower Realms. The Inner Circle Cabalists make Cabal policy, assigning lower-degree members to investigate problems, react to threats, sieze resources, or pursue opportunities. The Inner Circle, acting in general consensus (strongly affected by internal politics), assigns Cabal assets, delineates rough "turf" boundaries for any Lodge or other faction, and polices or judges feuds and vendettas. Any important faction within the Cabal needs the support of at least one member of the Inner Circle, or its other enemies nibble it to death while the Cabal's resources go to more favored areas. Thus, any significant school of thought or behavior has a representative within the Inner Circle, and occasionally more than one.

This principle works in the converse, as well. By the time a Cabalist has reached the Inner Circle, he has almost always accumulated a sizable faction of pupils, recruits, allies, or simply members who owe him favors. This patronage network serves as espionage service, private army, research team, and power base all in one. Individual Masters will have accumulated different followings, optimized to aid them in their own obsessions or simply thrown together by the ad hoc needs of a century of politicking. These networks occasionally fission if a Master's key aide decides to buck for the Inner Circle on his own — or with the help of his former mentor's rival. The Grand Masters keep these struggles from getting out of hand — but they also keep them boiling to distract the Masters from moving too rapidly into Grand Masterhood themselves.

5.1.5.1 Master (*Magister*)

To enter the Inner Circle, a Philosopher must seek out a Master or Grand Master to test his fitness. If the Philosopher is a stranger, or unknown to the Master in question, he may be asked for references. Where none are available, most Masters like to discover whatever they can about the applicant, using their own networks to do so. (Running a "background check" on a would-be Master is the kind of dangerously open-ended task that Theorists dread.) If he can demonstrate his bona fides, or the Master has become sufficiently curious (or nervous) to approve the applicant's candidacy, the way is cleared for testing.

Some Masters merely test, exhaustively, for magical knowledge. Others challenge would-be Masters to sorcerous

combat; killing one's tester in such a challenge does demonstrate skill, and often brings the applicant to the favorable attention of the dead Master's rivals. The final traditional test is to succeed at an impossibility; a vampire candidate will be asked to walk through a cathedral yard at high noon, or a werewolf to drink liquid silver. Magi must be prepared for similarly dangerous demands, and fulfil them on the spot. One common test for a human magus Master candidate is to survive his own beheading. It's considered bad form for a tester to demand a service — that's for Practitioners.

Once the Philosopher has become a Master, other Masters will almost always seek to envelop him in a web of alliances and favors. The new Master may be asked to join a defense council against the djinn, serve as ambassador to Atlantis, give some promising Practitioner a personal tutorial in vampirism, or aid in the subversion of a Latin American nation to stabilize Cabal control on Earth. Deft, more flexible, more successful Masters soon accumulate enough favors to begin horse-trading for their own pet projects or vital concerns.

5.1.6 The Grand Masters (*Magister Ipsissim*)

To become a Grand Master, a Cabalist must enter Atziluth (p. 00). When they emerge, Grand Masters often possess a certain overwhelming force of personality, a kind of dominant presence that few lesser beings can withstand. Even arrogant magi or ancient vampire lords have been known to fall into sullen silence at a Grand Master's glare; within the Inner Realms only the Archangels and the most powerful eikones treat them as inferiors. As the final authorities within the Cabal, the Grand Masters hold the world in their hands. When they agree, when the Cabal itself is threatened, there may be no more powerful and dangerous force in the entire cosmos.

A number of the more famous and powerful Grand Masters currently known to be alive appear below.

5.1.6.1 Erzsbet Bathori

Hungary's legendary "Blood Countess," Erzsbet Bathori became a vampire in the year 1607 by means of assiduous experiments involving the death of hundreds of her serving girls and local peasant tenants. Although her cousin, the King of Hungary, ordered her imprisonment in 1610, she took advantage of the isolation to explore the new realms of magic her abilities opened up for her. In 1614, she departed her cell by entering the Astral Realm along the decan of Kurta 1, and has never looked back. Her legendary beauty, psychopathic discipline, and impressive self-creation attracted a coterie of vampires frustrated with the stasis and tedium of the Pavane (sidebar, p. 00). She set out to master vampirism and the energies of Kurta 1, and in 1734 a penggallen Cabalist recruited her based on her bloody success at both. With his mysterious disappearance in 1888, Erzsbet Bathori became the dean of the Cabal's vampire community.

Her faction within the Cabal maintains a hearty interest in necromancy and contains many of the Cabal's vampires, but her overbearing personality has cost her as many recruits as her beauty and knowledge have attracted. Her rivals suspect her of planning to completely absorb the Pavane into her own faction, and to use them as either the raw material or as shock troops in further explorations of the negative decans Kurta 1, Akton, Belbel, and Tepsisem — and of Nefthada, the decan of pleasure. Anyone with significant rituals, artifacts, or knowledge concerning these decans can assure himself of the Countess' patronage — or enmity.

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5.1.6.2 Cagliostro

Appearing on the European scene in 1770, "Count" Alessandro Cagliostro founded magical schools and lodges, healed the poor, performed alchemical feats before nobility and high church officials, and made enemies by the score. In 1789, the Inquisition arrested him in Rome, flung him into prison, and announced that the soi-disant Count was actually the Palermo petty thief Giuseppe Balsamo. Although the Inquisition's prisoner died in 1795, rumors ran through the occult community of Europe that Cagliostro had somehow cheated death. In 1863, a magician presented himself to Erasmus Rooke for initiation as a Master, giving his name as Cagliostro. Passing every test Rooke could devise, he explained that he had discovered a means of switching his consciousness from body to body. Cagliostro claimed he had possessed Balsamo and then "jumped" to another identity after Balsamo's arrest. Rooke confirmed him as a Master, and since 1863, five successive figures have assumed Cagliostro's position within the Cabal, each claiming to be the Italian magus' new form. Even his closest confidants claim not to know whether Cagliostro is lying (or even still the same entity), how far back his streak of incarnations goes, and how exactly he accomplishes his switches — is he a human magus with a neat ritual, a powerful psi, or a determined spirit? Cabalists who investigate these questions, or who seek out his previous bodies (which could be extraordinarily powerful magical artifacts in themselves) disappear with alarming predictability.

Cagliostro's agenda is likewise murky, and likewise dangerous. He tends to push the boundaries of the Cabal's policies of secrecy. He claims to be concealing the truth by interference and misdirection, rather than by brutal cover-ups and official skepticism. His great love is jewelry and gems, and he remains an accomplished alchemist, continually searching for the Philosopher's Stone. Cagliostro maintains a thriving trade with Atlantis (p. 00) in rare artifacts and materia, and his personal collection occupies townhouses in New York, London, and Milan. He also maintains an active role in finance; his current incarnation owns several major European cartels and a private Greek island.

5.1.6.3 John Dee

Court magician and astrologer to Queen Elizabeth I and the Holy Roman Emperor Rudolf II, John Dee was possibly the greatest magical genius in history. He developed ceremonies, especially theurgies for interacting with spirits of Briah, that even today to only the finest occultists can comprehend. A brilliant cartographer and cosmographer, Dee mapped ley lines, computed patterns in the Gates of Thoth, and developed conceptions of space-time unity prefiguring Einstein — and magical theories joining them that recalled those of Hermes Trismegistos. Upon his death in 1608, Dee somehow traveled back through the Iconic Realm and "overlaid" himself onto his previous life pattern beginning in 1558, the year he became Queen Elizabeth's magus. Every fifty years, Dee repeats the process, watching his life unfold while continuing and furthering his researches. By now, his supremely evolved mentality operates on seven dimensional levels at once, coordinating a dizzying knot of relationships, experiments, researches, and objectives across four centuries. The resulting knot in time makes Elizabethan London a temporal fulcrum (sidebar, p. 00), from which Dee uses occult dramaturgy, Enochian rituals, and careful attention to the ebbs and currents of the Four Realms to influence events elsewhere. (For "mundane" historical statistics for Dee, see pp. WWi68–69.)

Even John Dee can't do everything himself; he is one of the most assiduous Grand Masters at recruiting new magi, and one of the least concerned with their past existence, species, or other ephemeral conditions. He does, however, prefer Christians for positions of trust and responsibility. Dee's plans, even more than those of most Grand Masters, remain opaque, but their effects are quite visible. An enormous ectoplasmic chain now links Dee's Mortlake sanctum in Assiah (near London) to Camelot in Briah (court of the mighty eikone King Arthur), and another links it to the Lunar Sphere (sidebar, p. 00) in Yetzirah. Dee seems to be spinning (or casting, or calling into being) similar chains to Fa'rie and

Atlantis. The chains have attracted astral barnacles, schools of spirits, and other peculiarly magical ecologies similar to those beneath the Sword Bridge (p. 00), which have made investigation of the chains difficult. (Dee's highly abstruse protective and creative spells and glamours also add considerably to the impenetrability of the chains' nature.) Possibly related to this project, Dee has the greatest collection of mappamondi (sidebar, p. 00) in the Cabal, reputedly including his masterwork, the *Cartis Quattuor Regiae Perfectis*, which depicts everything in the known cosmos.

5.1.6.4 The Insidious Doctor Fang

According to his own version of the story, Fang Wu Shih is a Taoist sage from the legendary Shaolin monastery who trained his mental powers to the utmost pitch of human perfection. More paranoid (or thoughtful) Cabalists fear that much, or all, of their knowledge of Dr. Fang actually comes from false memories implanted in them by his unequalled psionic abilities. According to some of his detractors, he is actually an eikone created by racist European fears of the Yellow Peril and brought into his current form through a series of magically potent novels written by the Golden Dawn initiate Sax Rohmer beginning in 1913.

Dr. Fang certainly relishes the role, and never hesitates to criticize the "short-term Western blindness" of the Cabal while fulfilling all the stereotypical expectations about the "Mandarin Devil-Doctor" with his noxious arthropod zoo, hidden Chinese fastnesses, and beautiful female acolytes. Perhaps because his own powers derive from human potential rather than magic, Dr. Fang investigates all aspects of biology, from homunculi to genetic engineering, in the quest for the Elixir Vitae. He has bred numberless monstrous servants in his underground vats, and his magical investigations center on Bianakith, Charchnoumis, and Harpax in addition to the predictable mind-controlling Ruax. Like Cagliostro, Dr. Fang also maintains a significant terrestrial organization, in his case a criminal ring with subterranean refuges in all the great cities of the Western world. Rumors whisper that Dr. Fang plans to conquer the material world as a final revenge on the astrally-focused magi of the Cabal.

5.1.6.5 Garravin

The fae wizard Garravin remains a legendary force within the Cabal. Born into the Sidhe aristocracy of Fa'rie around 600 A.D., he more than anyone helped create the Cabal as it exists today. His War of the Elm (p. 00) nearly destroyed all that he had built, and only a royal summons from Oberon, King of Fa'rie, forced him to leave the field to his opponents. He retreated to in his own estates on the fringes of Fa'rie near the Black Forest on Earth, where he primarily remains to this day. He rejoined the Cabal as a Grand Master in 1688, and has slowly used his own legendary status (modern Cabalists think of him much as modern Frenchmen regard Napoleon — a seductively glorious tyrant) to rebuild his influence. His romantically-minded followers across Europe, Mexico, and the American South found Lodges affiliated with his goals and positions, which remain unclear to other Cabalists.

His research centers on exploration of Briah and Yetzirah, and of the various pocket-dimensions tangent to them and to the Material Realm. Garravin remains a major supporter of the nonhuman membership of the Cabal, on good terms with both Athéne du Sarrazin and Erszbet Bathori. Many of Garravin's agents are ultraterrestrials, or rare magical beings such as antlered men, quinotaurs, and intelligent manticores. Others include hereditary criminal families in Corsica, Sicily, and the Carolinas. His major rival within the Cabal is John Dee, who is on rather better terms with Oberon than he is. Proud and aloof, the surest way to provoke Garravin is to allude to the rumor that he has human blood.

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5.1.6.6 Lord Kaas'sth'raa

During the War of the Elm, both factions of the Cabal became aware that much of the European aristocracy served some third allegiance. Both Garravin and his enemies investigated, and discovered the presence of the Serpent–Lord aristocracy (p. 00) embedded within European royalty. Both sides courted Serpent–Lord assistance, with mixed results; the Reptoids almost always demanded more than their aid was worth. When Garravin retreated, the Cabal spent two centuries licking its wounds before approaching the Serpent–Lords again. John Dee had the idea, however, to bypass the haughty and inflexible European families for a more direct approach, to the Serpent–Lords' ancient capital in South America.

Dee's emissary Sir Walter Raleigh entered the Orinoco valley in 1595 and, using Dee's magical protections and talismans, arranged a meeting with Lord Kaas'sth'raa, who accepted membership in the Cabal and arranged an accommodation between the European Reptoids and the Cabal. Those Reptoid families who held out found themselves badly diminished during the Rosicrucian War and the Masonic Revolution 150 years later. By 1815, when Lord Kaas'sth'raa paid his first visit to Europe (or, as he put it, his "first visit to Europe in ten millennia"), he had become a Grand Master. His main role in the Cabal is as liaison with the Serpent–Lord civilization; he accepts a few selected Cabalists as students in the Serpent–Lord cities and sends a few Reptoids out to be trained in Hermetic magic every generation. The Cabal has no idea of his true rank within Serpent–Lord society, and he brushes off such questions as somehow impolitic and beneath everyone's dignity. Very little excites him, or at least he shows very little more than polite interest in anything he hears or sees.

5.1.6.7 Albert Garner Kavanagh III

The Kavanagh family has been part of the Cabal since Elizabethan times, when Sir Walter Raleigh recruited Aidan Kavanagh in Kilmarnock Castle. Albert Garner Kavanagh III was the scion of the American branch of the dynasty (the Anglo–Irish branch remains very active in European government and finance, having intermarried with many ancient Cabal bloodlines in the meantime), and the heir to the immense Kavanagh shipping and distilling fortunes. Kavanagh worked diligently to keep the Cabal, and magic in general, a secret, funding research into paranormal affairs in order to recruit promising students and to publicize the work of frauds and crazies. To the extent that the Cabal had a temporal leadership, it operated through Kavanagh or his political and economic interests; his inherited political network made and unmade senators, governors and even Presidents, as his inherited billions made him immune from scrutiny or retribution. Kavanagh's inherited magical gifts were also impressive, but underused until a freak car accident killed him on October 23, 1996. Fortunately, the car was near one of the Aeon Labs research facilities (see sidebar, p. 00) in New Hampshire; his driver was able to summon help before dying himself.

Kavanagh awakened to find himself a disembodied head, transferred to an experimental psionic mind–support tank in the last moments before brain death set in. One of Kavanagh's many doubles (for public affairs and security precautions alike) was rapidly brought in and brainwashed by Kavanagh; the accident hushed up and erased. Kavanagh's personal staff and a few trusted Cabalist minions work to administer the family fortune and political machine in his absence. Now, Kavanagh takes a far more active role in magical investigations than previously, searching for traces of the other magical heads throughout history from Bacon's bronze head to Baphomet the god of the Templars to the prophesying head of Bran to even the sacred head of John the Baptist. His grimly ruthless "Headhunter" teams (recruited from the baser elements of the Cabal, and from conventional organized crime and mercenary organizations convinced they work only for a crazy billionaire) have acquired a veritable museum of unpleasant craniological materials and a fairly unsavory

reputation on the occult black market. Whether because of Kavanagh's post-mortem psychotic mania or some unforeseen property of his life-support device, he has so far been unable to transplant himself into a magically regrown body. His personal research goal, of course, is to discover which of the other Grand Masters arranged his "accident."

5.1.6.8 Khaibitu-na-Khonsu

Although Cabalistic tradition identifies Khaibitu-na-Khonsu as a Pharaoh of the 5th Dynasty, no king of that name appears on any of the known extant papyri. It is more likely that he was one of the dark acolytes raised up by Queen Nitocris, the blasphemous last pharaoh of the Old Kingdom. However, some fringe Egyptologists speculate that "Khaibitu-na-Khonsu" was a new throne name taken by the Pharaoh Unas, last of the 5th Dynasty and author of the *Pyramid Texts*, after he successfully escaped from the Lands of the Dead and returned (possibly at Nitocris' bidding) to wage war upon the gods. These theorists argue that it was, in fact, Khaibitu-na-Khonsu's war against Ra that destroyed the Egyptian Old Kingdom and wrecked the ancient sacred ley networks of Egypt. Whatever the truth, the Cabal gives Khaibitu-na-Khonsu due reverence as the first great human magician and the first Grand Master of the Cabal (p. 00).

Unfortunately, some Cabalists refused to leave matters there, with the founding father safely immured in the mists of history. During the great dawn of Egyptian archaeology in the early 19th century the Sons of Imhotep (p. 00) discovered Khaibitu-na-Khonsu's mummy and stole it from its crypt. According to contemporary rumor, they then necromantically reanimated him, and follow his orders to this very day. Similar rumors, of course, attend many of the ancient Grand Masters of the Cabal, from Apollonius of Tyana to Dietrich Eckhart. Thus, skeptics and cynics believe that the resurrection of Khaibitu-na-Khonsu is either a myth, or that it was somehow botched, and the Sons of Imhotep must continuously re-establish necromantic communion with his increasingly incoherent and maddened shade. Thanks to his war with Ra and the backblast from the Gates of Thoth casting, he may have fractured into a myriad of multiple personalities, giving vastly contradictory orders and information based on their immediate experiences. However, the Sons of Imhotep often use mysteriously powerful magics, or demonstrate knowledge that could only come from deep research or some very long-dead source.

5.1.6.9 Koschei the Deathless

Nobody knows which Cabal scholar carefully followed the hints and clues in the Russian *Primary Chronicle* and the Glagolitic scriptures. Nobody knows which brilliant magus, believing that he had finally discovered the True Philosopher's Stone and the secret of immortality, dug up the Emerald Egg containing the heart of Koschei the Deathless deep in the Siberian wastes. Nobody knows how that brilliant thaumaturge somehow drew the true life force of the legendary Russian demigod down from Briah and into the Egg. Nobody knows, because Koschei ate him and walked out of the snow leaving behind only Russian folk legend and a bloody smear of emerald shavings and liver paste.

As a fallen god, Koschei looks at the Realms rather differently than most Cabalists. (One possible set of stats for Koschei appears on pp. RU100–101.) To him, his magic is simply a means to an end, rather than scholarship or philosophy for its own sake. Koschei sees fewer differences between the Realms; they are all full of annoying bravos, interesting stories, and beautiful women. He pursues women who catch his fancy, often securing immensely valuable or important magical artifacts or secrets simply to win the love of some female magus. This makes his minions very unpredictable; they can show up anywhere, looking for anything. He has a sort of generalized fondness for Russia, but hardly considers the trivial details of earthly politics worth his while — except for a period in the 1780s when he was one of the suitors for Catherine the Great's favors. As one of the few true immortals in the Cabal (no matter how gruesomely he is murdered,

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he reappears after three days seemingly no worse for the experience), he can often attract initiates to his service. Few of them have the patience to stay long, although those who grant him good service may get extra lives as a kind of severance package.

5.1.6.10 Marie Laveau

In 1830, Marie Laveau, "the Widow Paris," became the Voodoo Queen of New Orleans, offering love potions, poisons, blessings and curses to a clientele spanning all levels of Crescent City society. Her network of servants and clients gave her information about every person of importance in New Orleans, and it's likely she padded her income with discreet blackmail. Born in 1796, she nursed the wounded at the Battle of New Orleans, flirted with Lafayette and Lafcadio Hearn, cooperated with both Confederate and Union authorities, and welcomed civic leaders to her voodoo services. She remained in her position of power, outmaneuvering and outliving all rivals, until the early 20th century; her last appearance came at a ball in 1918. Conventional historians will point to Marie Laveau's tomb in St.-Louis Cemetery with its death-date of 1881 and assure you that Marie's daughter, and later granddaughter, succeeded her in the role of "Widow Paris," thus explaining Marie's seemingly eternal youth. In truth, not even the Cabal can fully explain it. A brilliant intuitive magician, young Marie Laveau synthesized the French grimoires in her husband's library with her own knowledge of voodoo to achieve an unprecedented level of power and influence over the loa. (Her husband, a Cabal Adept named Jacques Paris, died in 1824.) How, exactly, she transformed that influence into apparent agelessness remains her secret. She left New Orleans on Armistice Day 1918 and spent the Jazz Age on a whirlwind tour of the world (including a passionate love affair with Koschei the Deathless in Paris), returning to America in 1931. She currently divides her time between Chicago, San Francisco, and Guinée, the loa domain beneath the Pearl-Bright Ocean.

She maintains an interest in voodoo, drawing many of her adepts from practitioners of all the Afro-Caribbean religions from Santería to candomblé to shango to Umbanda. Her information network is second to none in the Cabal, and she is as willing to dicker for prize tidbits of inside knowledge as she ever was during her days at the center of New Orleans gossip. Those who double-cross her or feed her incorrect information wind up dead, or worse; her rivals eagerly trade speculations about her dealings with the less-savory loa, and about her propensity for zombie security.

5.1.6.11 Oleupata Horsekiller

On Walpurgisnacht, 1943, German tank forces fought a brief and inconclusive artillery duel against the Soviet guards division holding the western bank of the Don River. Massive death-energies had permeated the Ukraine over the last decade, stoked by the warfare of dueling genocides. One of the shells arcing between the two armies impacted on a Scythian burial mound; the explosion closed a spark gap between centuries, and the death-energies flowed into a Gate of Thoth. Out of the Gate, returned to full and ruddy youth and beauty by the blood sacrifice of her slaves and horses, stepped the Scythian priestess Oleupata, the Horsekiller.

No other person knows how she spent the rest of the war; tens of thousands of men could, and did, vanish in the Ukraine without anyone bothering to track them down. She surfaced in Istanbul in 1946 and claimed membership, and indeed Grand Mastership, in the Cabal dating back over three millennia. No living Grand Master could confirm her claim, and she passed every sorcerous test with contemptuous ease. Oleupata acts very human, consumed with rage at any snub or refusal or with vengeance against her enemies. (For some reason, she bears a special hatred for the djinn.) She has killed Koschei twice after stormy love affairs, and several less fortunate other lovers more permanently. Her incredibly callous disregard for other human life, even for a Cabalist, argues that she may be an extremely powerful zalozhny (p. UN85),

lich, or wraith; her powers seem constrained only by her still–primitive imagination.

5.1.6.12 Erasmus Rooke

The greatest magical engineer of all time, the Edison to Dee's Newton, Erasmus Rooke was born on June 20, 1837, at the precise moment Victoria was crowned Queen of England. In Rooke's early days at Edinburgh, he developed a number of simple but amazingly effective magical instruments for laboratory work, alchemy, and enchantments. The invention that made his name, however, was the Stasis Box (p. 00), which revolutionized travel and trade in the Inner Realms. He then devoted several years to exploring the Realms, often vanishing for months at a time only to return with precise wavelength measurements of the Sirens' song, a hydrographic chart of the Venusian oceans, or the alchemical spectrography of the Gorgon's visage. Incorporating these precise data into his lab work, he was able to develop devices and artifacts more perfectly calibrated, versatile, and reliable than any other magical equipment. In every field from aetheric physics to Egyptology to tanistic zymurgy, Rooke collaborated with top Cabalist experts in the field, often beating them at their own game. He promulgated his rigorous laboratory observations, theories, and occasional speculative extrapolations in privately–published monographs and closely–subscribed lecture tours of pre–eminent Lodges. He played a vital role in the Great Game against the djinn, and ably coordinated Cabal activities during the German unpleasantness from his "pigeon coop" in the bowels of the British Museum.

Since the war, Rooke has seemed a bit at loose ends; his publication stream has dwindled from copious, to erratic, to glacial. He spent much of the 1950s and 1960s as a lecturer–in–residence at Martense College (sidebar, p. 00) but has since seemingly become completely peripatetic, living out of carpetbags and disappearing into the Inner Realms without warning. Alone among Grand Masters, Rooke is on relatively good terms with everyone; his only known agenda is his oft–repeated credo "Expand and Improve." Of course, his polymathic interests could conceal a malign goal by hiding in plain sight. After all, if any other Cabalist had analyzed qliphothic spores at an underground facility in New Mexico, or interviewed banshees at Ebola sites, or published the kabbalistic calculus of planetary dissolution in *The Dynamics of Lemuria*, it would be suspicious. But to think such things of Erasmus Rooke is laughable; even today, he still travels everywhere with his young English apprentice Timmy. Of course, Rooke has had 47 different apprentices over the years, and none of them have survived to reach Adept rank. And people who've known Rooke over the years sometimes muse that every time they see him, he looks as young as ever — and just a bit fatter.

5.1.6.13 Athéne du Sarrazin

The du Sarrazins have served as the lead clan in Western Europe's interlinked shapeshifter bloodlines since the ninth century A.D., heading a loose congeries of werewolf, werebear, selkie, and related septs. Their bloodline goes even farther back; pheromonal scent memories exist of remote du Sarrazin ancestors harrying Neanderthal man across the Jura glacier during the Ice Age. In 1065, Garravin personally defeated Thibault du Sarrazin in a Great Hunt spanning four hundred miles from the Yorkshire moors to the Ardennes Forest, at which point Thibault agreed to join the Cabal. The du Sarrazins have traditionally been activist Cabalists, favoring an aggressive policy of control and dominion. Thibault's descendant, Leonard du Sarrazin, played a key role in the Masonic Revolution of 1789 and in providing backing and support for the Midwinter Aton project in Weimar Germany. He died in a 1944 American firebomb attack on Hamburg, leaving his sister Athéne the head of the du Sarrazin clan.

Not provably involved in her brother's disastrous German scheme, Athéne du Sarrazin rapidly ascended to Grand Master status in the immediate postwar era. A gorgeous auburn werewolf of lush middle age, Athéne must juggle clan and pack

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politics against the demands of the Cabal. Although she effaced herself during the 1950s, she slowly returned the du Sarrazins to the leadership of the pro-intervention wing of the Cabal. Her agents may have created in some large part the "Occult Explosion" of the 1960s, possibly in alliance with those of Cagliostro, who also played a somewhat ambiguous role during the late war. Along with her family's ancient ally Garravin, she sees herself as a patroness of the nonhuman element in the Cabal. Her own magical investigations concentrate on decans such as Charchnoumis, Eneuth, Marder™, and Sahu.

5.2 The Ways of the Cabal

The 19th century French Cabalist and ritual magician Eliphas Lévi defined the four Principles of the Magician as follows: *Scire, Audere, Velle, et Tacere* — To Know, To Dare, To Will, and To Keep Silent. The Cabal takes these four directives as its guiding belief structure and its reason for existence.

5.2.1 To Know

Hermetic magic is the secret of Cabal members, the intellectual property that grants them their inordinate power in the shadow world. (Hence, non-Cabalist characters should not be able to use the decanic or astrological correspondences to gain spell bonuses to skill.) The Cabal seeks to learn more about the magical laws undergirding reality in all the Realms by experiment, induction, practice, and research. In addition to requiring genuine magical (or at least paranormal) proficiency for advancement in degree, the Cabal attempts to maintain and preserve magical knowledge in the Great Library and the various Black Schools.

5.2.2 To Dare

In service of the directive to Know, Cabalists explore every possible corner of the Four Realms. The Cabal also acts as a sort of traveler's aid society, providing scouting reports, logistics, and occasional rear area support and direction for expeditions deep into Yetzirah and Briah. Many of these expeditions find it necessary to return to previously known regions and chart the dangers and opportunities anew. Even Briah shifts, as the various eikones and gods gain and lose in power and influence, and the astral winds and eddies continuously reshape Yetzirah.

5.2.3 To Will

The Cabal also Dares to declare itself an independent force, with the Will to control what it can and to destroy what it cannot. It did, after all, arise from a war against the gods themselves — Cabalists have little trouble finding examples of heroic exploits in their past. The Cabal knows that it also must maintain the Will to hold itself together, to preserve knowledge, and to remain independent. Any body of supernaturals that opposes the Cabal has declared itself a threat to those goals — it defies unity, divides knowledge, and endangers the Cabal's freedom of action. Finally, the Cabal works to exert its Will on the outside world, particularly on the governments and economies of Earth. To fail to govern the world is to fail in the task the first Cabalists demanded when they rebelled against the gods.

5.2.4 To Keep Silent

For all of these directives to eventuate, the Cabal must preserve its own existence, and occasional experiments aside, that means secrecy. A member of the Cabal can be blackballed, no matter what his level in the organization, if he violates the order's prime rule: never reveal the existence of any occult being (magician, psi, or magically-affected human), member or not! Any member guilty of such an act (as determined by a superior) is removed from the order via a terrifying ritual. Such exiles become fair game for other Cabalists. Several of the Cabal's hot-blooded members delight in an excuse to hunt down and "punish" the indiscreet. Exiles from the Inner Circle, who possess dangerous secrets of the Cabal, are almost inevitably sentenced to death upon their banishment. This can lead to magical conflicts that may endanger innocent lives, or (as in the last parallel instance) to global warfare.

5.2.5 Rank and Power

The correlation between rank in the Cabal and degree of magical proficiency will vary between Lodges, and between campaigns. For a primarily Earth-centered game of "secret magic" and conspiracy, Outer Circle magi need only magical aptitude or potential supernatural powers. Initiates and Novices may be merely occultists and low-point supernaturals, learning Thaumatology and other Hermetic lore rather than immediate spell-slinging. Adepts will have more power and control, knowing one or two spells at an adequate skill level (between 10 and 12). Middle Circle members will know most spells of one or two particular colleges, with skill levels decreasing proportionally to the power of the spell. Masters and Grand Masters command as many spells as the GM wishes, all at high skill levels. Psi abilities follow the same pattern — almost any psi-using Cabalist will have high power levels, but skill levels will be relative to their position in the order.

For a game with less concern for realistic secrecy, or with more action on the magic-rich inner planes, even Initiates may know a few feeble cantrips, and Adepts might be relatively powerful supernaturals in their own right, skilled users of a college or two. Middle Circle Cabalists will be rapidly expanding their powers and repertoires; Inner Circle Cabalists will be powerful supernatural beings and gifted magi. GMs may even wish to allow Extended Magery (p. 00) for Grand Masters in such a campaign, making them the equivalent of *GURPS Myth* archmagi.

5.2.6 Some (In)Famous Lodges

A few Lodges manage an existence independent of any given leader, passing down their own traditions and secrets in mini-Cabals within the greater Cabal. A smaller handful yet manage to survive more than two or three generations before infighting, mission drift, or treachery scatters their membership and lore to the Cabal at large. These "independent Lodges" often create chapter Lodges of their own; some of them are as widespread as the Cabal itself was in the 15th century.

5.2.6.1 The Brotherhood of Luxor

This secretive group likely began in the 1840s as one of Leonard du Sarrazin's projects for tweaking the magical perception of the outside world. The B. of L. (as it is called in early Theosophical documents) had a transatlantic membership primarily in France and the United States. The B. of L. either instigated, or directed the course of, the 1848 Revolution in France and the birth of Spiritualism in America. It may have intended to turn Napoleon III's French Empire into a sorcerous kingdom, but the distraction of the American Civil War drained much of its resources. The B. of L.

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strongly supported Lincoln and the North, possibly because its American master was the sex–magician and scryer Paschal Beverly Randolph, descended from the royal family of Madagascar. Untraceable rumor hinted that Randolph's "Madagascar" ancestry was actually *Lemurian* blood, which would explain the bitter rivalry between the B. of L. and the Theosophists. In 1884, the B. of L. went semi–public, creating an "Outer Order" as the Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor. That Brotherhood still exists in Zurich today, studying astrology, magic mirrors, thanatology, and sexual sorcery. The secretive B. of L. went deep underground after the fall of France in 1940, but may currently operate the thriving European underground market in ghosts.

5.2.6.2 The Invisible College of Thoth–Hermes

John Dee's agents Elias Ashmole, Robert Boyle, and William Lilly founded the Invisible College in London in 1645 (removing it to Oxford in 1648) to study and promulgate the operative laws of the Material Realm. In 1660, they had accomplished enough of the groundwork to create an exoteric group, the Royal Society, which eventually became the premier scientific body in the world. Isaac Newton's work within the Invisible College brilliantly derived gross material physics from Hermetic theory, laying the groundwork for the Industrial Revolution, which the College (and much of the Cabal) encouraged as a useful distraction from magic.

The Invisible College still exists, meeting at Oxford to keep track of mortal scientific developments and their possible applications to magical theory. Invisible College scholars have pioneered computer–driven kabbalistic analysis, nuclear alchemy, and mana–mapping interferometry. The Invisible College sometimes works in partnership with Aeon Laboratories; on other projects the two groups compete. Erasmus Rooke held the Boyle Chair in the Invisible College from 1862 to 1914, when he requested an emeritus posting allowing him to concentrate on the war emergency.

5.2.6.3 The Sarmoung Brotherhood

This ancient traditional sect passes down its own arcane rituals and theologies from master to novice as it has done without interruption (according to its own records, and to certain Armenian and Persian sacred texts) since the time of Gilgamesh, King of Uruk. Gilgamesh himself learned the Sarmoung rituals from Utnapishtim, the immortal survivor of the Flood. According to arcane Lodges such as the Wheel of Ptah, the Sarmoung Brotherhood knows the "wisdom of the bees," the secret dances and movements that the gods make in their sleep, in their lovemaking, and in their death–throes.

The Sarmoung Brotherhood operates out of a single monastery somewhere in the mountains of Asia between Damascus and Kabul. Any traveler who can find the monastery may learn some of the Brotherhood's outer rituals. The Cabalists who study there primarily work with texts and traditions regarding the decans Anost r, Axi™ph th, Bianakith, and Sahu. To learn the Brotherhood's inner rituals requires a total rebirth as a Brother, a ritual involving the physical and astral dismemberment and recreation of the postulant. Solomon may have been a Sarmoung initiate as well as a Cabalist, which could explain why the djinn have left the Sarmoung monastery unmolested during their millennia of war and conquest across western Asia.

5.2.6.4 The Sons of Imhotep

Any objective observer must admit that the Sons of Imhotep are not a particularly stable batch of people, even for Cabalists. Their membership has an overlarge share of foaming homicidal maniacs, inbred scions of ancient aristocratic families obsessed with tracing their lineages back to Biblical and Pharaonic times, and cultists of the less–pleasant

Egyptian hybrid deities. Some of the higher-ranking Sons (it is rumored) have even magically altered their appearance to match the Egyptian deities, and now sport the heads of crocodiles or falcons beneath their robes. The Sons (who aggressively recruit magical architects) build bizarre Egyptian-style follies and monuments in which to hold their hidden rites. The Sons of Imhotep trace their own lineage back to Imhotep, architect of the first Pyramids, but they don't seem to have emerged until the early 18th century. Beginning as a conclave of scholars in London, Paris, and the Rhineland, the Sons rapidly attached themselves to the Egyptological societies and established a strong presence in Egypt that endured until Nasser's coup in 1952. Their current headquarters is somewhere in London, possibly connected somehow with the new Canary Wharf pyramid. Some of the more modern Cabalists consider the Sons an antiquated embarrassment, but their nearly-psychotic dedication to secrecy and conspiracy, and their unquestioned effectiveness at research and retrieval (in areas of particular interest such as Egyptology, sacred architecture, and alchemy), keep them powerful and relatively influential forces in the Cabal.

5.2.7 The True Secret Chief

It is possible, and often theorized, that there is a ninth, ultra-secret level, making the hierarchy three circles of three positions each. If this position truly exists, it is likely held by only one person, the true "secret chief" of the Cabal. Interestingly, the Grand Masters, who might be expected to pour cold water on such speculation, seem to behave as if they half-believe in the True Secret Chief themselves. Something, or someone, has kept their differences from flaring into bitter civil war over the last five centuries, at least. Among the candidates for the secret chief of the ninth degree are Hermes Trismegistos, Prester John (p. 00), the Aethyr Elemiah (lord of Kumeat 1, the decan of magic), Satan, a Tibetan Ascended Master, the Wandering Jew, and the Comte de Saint-Germain — who may be all of the above.

5.2.7.1 Le Comte de Saint-Germain

During a dazzling and meteoric career from 1743 to 1784, an enigmatic figure charmed and baffled European courts and Cabalists from London to St. Petersburg. Calling himself (among other pseudonyms) "le Comte de Saint-Germain," this man of mystery spoke of discovering the Elixir Vitae, gave away enormous (and genuine) diamonds, moved smoothly in occult, mercantile, and noble circles alike, and was repeatedly seen after his "death" on numerous occasions from 1785 to 1972. He was a master of all arts and languages, never seemed to require food or drink, and knew the most intimate details of ancient history as though they were personal reminiscences. (A rather more mundane reading of Saint-Germain in *GURPS* terms appears on pp. WWii70–71.)

After his "death," he rapidly gained a reputation as a true secret master, especially as the Cabal had been unable to discover the barest details of his actual identity or nature. Figures corresponding to his description still turn up, sometimes in the midst of a grave crisis, but more often at a cusp point to avert one, and offer cryptic, but always accurate, advice. He has at least four cults worshiping him, with varying degrees of magical skill and general coherence. To paraphrase the old saying, the average Cabalist doesn't believe in Saint-Germain, but very much fears his anger.

5.2.8 Other Grand Masters

The GM should feel free to demote, kill, mysteriously occult, or edit out of history any of the Grand Masters mentioned in this book. Although the list as given should cover most bases, a GM may wish to personalize his campaign by creating and adding his own Grand Master. The following guidelines may help with that process.

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What's cool and different about your Grand Master? Magicians are quirky, idiosyncratic people, and Grand Masters especially so. Whether it's some bizarre belief system ("Time in the Material Realm runs on a 333-year cycle and then repeats itself."), goal for the Cabal to follow ("We should magically terraform Mars and move the Cabal's base there."), power or technique (a thaumaturge of Tepsisem, drawing energy from ecological devastation), the new Grand Master should stand out even in a crowd of Grand Masters.

What role does he play in the story line? Is he a main villain? A main patron? A needful distraction? A *deus ex machina*? The more screen time the new Grand Master will get, the more different and developed he needs to be. His special abilities, nature, and even species should help his role in the storyline along.

Who are his natural faction? Sometimes, that will flow from his plans — the Grand Master who wants to terraform Mars will attract astrologers, activists, elementalists, ultraterrestrials, and crazy people. Or, if there's some supernatural race you feel is underrepresented, giving them their own Grand Master will go a long way. If Chiron, the famous centaur scholar, has become a Grand Master in his golden years, his faction may comprise centaurs and other mythical beings such as fauns, nymphs, and mermaids.

Who are his natural enemies? This is the other side of the previous question; the GM should begin by deciding which other Grand Masters will likely oppose the additional secret chief. If the new Grand Master is a pro-human fanatic, his opponents will include (at least) Bathori, Garravin, Kaas'sth'raa, and du Sarrazin. Their factions, and the enemies of his natural supporters, will make up his opposition.

5.2.9 Mappamondi

The goal of Hermetic thought is to understand and recapitulate the world. One means to that end is mapmaking — by exploring and interrelating the world in a graphical scheme, the Hermetic cartographer gains a measure of knowledge, and therefore control, over it. *Mappamondi*, or maps of the world (which to the Cabal includes the Four Realms), serve to represent such research in progress. Some maps "overlay" the other Realms onto representations of Assiah, other traditions depict the entire cosmos unfolded and spread out. Specific maps depict astral currents, dangerous areas, and so forth; Erasmus Rooke developed and codified an entire cartographic symbology for astral and iconic mapping.

Magically drafted maps often grant bonuses to Seeker, Trace, Pathfinder, and similar spells, assuming they depict the correct territory. Some mappamondi have actually recorded enough of reality that they begin to change to reflect it; boundary changes in Yugoslavia appeared on the Cabal's great globe in Edinburgh eight months before the civil wars began. Studying these maps can therefore serve as a kind of divination. John Dee, the greatest of the occult cosmographers, is reputed to possess a mappamond, the *Cartis Quattuor Regiae Perfectis*, which works the other way — properly scribed changes to it change the world in response.

More concretely, the maps and journals of specific Cabal expeditions — whether the Templar voyages to America in the 1360s, the Rooke Geodetic Survey of Atlantis in 1866–1867, or the Qualls Expedition to chart the coastline of the Pearl-Bright Ocean between 1891 and 1901 — contain vital information for travelers seeking to retrace those voyages. Hence, many mappamondi become the carefully hoarded property of the more secretive sorcerers, and of exploratory groups such as the Golden Asten, Amonis Albioni, or Blind Haroeris Lodges. Only their members, or those they need favors from, can see the complete surveys of these remote regions.

5.2.10 The Black School

To bring the Cabal out of the Dark Ages, the Grand Master Garravin founded a magical academy in Salerno, Italy in 860 A.D. Under the brilliant Neapolitan magus Vergil, it gained a reputation as the *Scholomance*, or "Black School," where the Devil taught sorcery and claimed his tuition in souls. Garravin founded succeeding Black Schools in Salamanca, Krakow, Edinburgh, and in the Carpathians above Lake Hermannstadt (modern Sibiu) in Transylvania. The Roman Inquisition burned out Salerno's School in 1282, and the reunified Cabal dissolved the Salamanca School in 1492 to use its scholars as cadre for new Lodges. The entire Krakow Black School, buildings and all, simply vanished in the confusion following the failed Polish Revolution of 1794. In addition to the surviving Scholomances in Romania and Scotland, and the Academy of Alexandria (refounded in Cairo in 1804), there is a Black School within Martense College in upstate New York, founded by American Cabalists during the witch trials of the 1690s. Martense tends to attract the more daring and even reckless students, where Edinburgh has a more buttoned-down old-school atmosphere. Sibiu remains a prime campus for psionics and for nonhuman supernatural study; Cairo is a top theoretical and historical center.

The Black Schools recruit Adepts, Novices, and even some Initiates demonstrating unusual aptitude for theoretical magic. Old Cabalistic families often also send their university-age children to Black Schools. Higher-grade Cabalists occasionally improve their standing, or promote pet theories, by giving lecture series or even formal classes, and the occasional Master will select a Scholomance as his research center. The greater magical resources, and independence from the outside world, available at these institutions allow Black Scholars to advance rapidly in sorcerous knowledge and practice. The "Black School tie" helps keep different Lodges in contact, and ensures a greater sense of inter-Cabal unity. Both their intrinsic resources and their value to the Cabal make the Black Schools juicy targets for internal conspiracies and external enemies.

5.2.11 The Great Library

From its earliest days, the Cabal has hoarded books on all topics. The Library of Seshat, which contained the scrolls on which the god Thoth wrote down the first words and the true history of the world, disappeared during Khaibitu-na-Khonsu's war against the gods. Partial copies of those scrolls survived until 272 A.D. when the retreating djinn destroyed the Library of Alexandria. The Cabal's libraries scattered to the four corners of the Earth; Garravin uncharacteristically neglected them during his reign, which gave the rebel Cabalists their initial edge. The nucleus of the current Cabal library began in Florence; during the Italian Wars of the 16th century, the Cabal removed it to Prague. John Dee arranged for the core of the Prague library to follow him to England in 1587, but much of the Cabal's carefully-reconstructed store of knowledge vanished during the Rosicrucian War. The London Library (which removed to Oxford during the Civil War) has been the center of the Cabal since the 17th century. Much of its collection is interfiled in the British Library and Museum complex, shelved without being accessible to non-Cabal researchers. The Hands of Seshat Lodge maintains the Great Library as a "library within a library," and all Grand Masters value its good opinion, urging every Cabalist to donate copies of all magical literature to the Library.

5.2.12 Aeon Laboratories

One of the more obscure holdings of the vast Kavanagh financial empire, Aeon Laboratories does cutting-edge research for multinational corporations, black-budget government agencies — and the Cabal. Aeon Laboratories is a Delaware corporation owned by a Cayman Islands bank. Its actual facilities are in New England and the Bay Area, with human

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experimentation farms in Liberia and an immense "assembly division" for quick mass production of new items in a sprawling factory in the hills above Bangalore, India. One primary task of Aeon is to serve as a clearinghouse for other experimental, classified, and "black technology" projects; thanks to Aeon's government contacts, and to sorcerous industrial espionage, it can duplicate almost any advanced engineering or technical project going on in the world within a matter of weeks. This gives Aeon researchers a holistic view of, and usually a substantial lead on, any competition, and engineers from CERN to Sony have committed murder for copies of Aeon's encrypted, internal *Panopticon of Current Researches* — which gives the Cabal a nice hook with which to blackmail them into working for Aeon.

The GM who wishes to support a more "technothriller" feel might wish to use Aeon Labs to introduce not only suitable TL8 gadgets from *GURPS Ultra-Tech* and *GURPS Ultratech 2*, but also necronium (p. T44) and depleted necronium (p. T47), mana-disruptors (p. T45), necrolasers (p. T46), spirit-proof body armor (p. T47), and any of the Black Beret equipment from pp. T91–94. Aeon Laboratories can be assumed to have access to industrial alchemy labs (p. T48).

5.2.13 The Brotherhood of Phlebas

After the second "accidental" global war in as many decades, a small coterie of Cabalists began to suspect the existence of a larger Cabal plan, at the highest levels of the Inner Circle, to decimate civilization — perhaps, even, to destroy the world. Why would the world's secret masters seek to eradicate their own dominion? Perhaps they wished to remake it, as the Godhead did in the Deluge. Perhaps they had been suborned by the qliploth, or by the howling Elder Things implied, by certain worm-eaten tomes, to roil and scratch outside even the Abyss. Perhaps, finally detached from humanity by millennia of seeking immortality and power, the Cabal's autocrats could not stand to let the world go on without them.

The possibility could not be ignored; although the premise was paranoid, the logic fit a thousand pieces of heretofore unremarked information. Slowly seeking out like-minded fellows, always guarding their conversations, over the last fifty years a firm cadre, the Brotherhood of Phlebas, evolved to investigate the possibility, and several others even more grim. For now, they have too little evidence, and far too few members, to think of moving against the leadership. But it may only take one big revelation to launch their revolution, whether they're ready or not.

5.2.14 Lending A Helping Claw

One of the most important functions of any local Cabal Lodge is to provide immediate services and assistance for its members, and to other Cabalists in the area. A well-run Lodge can provide small but strategic loans, the address of a motel where the proprietors accept cash and ask no questions about odd smells, a contact for purchasing "unusual herbal supplies," a briefing on local law-enforcement, the phone number of a lawyer on retainer, and so forth. Some Lodges can even provide medical help used to asking no questions, and providing unconventional therapy for unusual wounds.

Richer, better-connected, or more powerful Lodges sometimes offer even more. A Lodge truly entrenched in (or as) the local power structure might be able to make tickets or even arrests disappear, provide alibis or untraceable slush funds, or even supply fake identification or fresh human corpses if need be. Some Lodges employ bands of roving human thugs (or one or two troll enforcers) for extra muscle or remotely-hired "hard jobs." Others may keep fully-stocked hospital facilities in the basement, or supplies of vital magical ingredients. (The user's home Lodge will be expected to provide recompense, of course.) Any well-established Lodge will have at least one safe house besides the Lodge chamber where a fugitive can be concealed from prying mortal eyes.

For any of these services except the most basic (shelter, business contacts), the Lodge offers them at its Lodge Master's discretion. If the Adept on the scene judges the situation urgent and the cause sensible, he can direct the entire resources of his coven to assist a Cabalist in need. If, on the other hand, he decides that the fugitive has foolishly endangered the Cabal, or his Lodge, he can resolve the problem less pleasantly — a safe house can become a prison, or a crypt, with alarming ease. On the whole, however, the "ghost railroad" remains robust. For a being damaged by sunlight or iron, traveling on the Material Realm can be as hazardous as cruising the astral gales of Yetzirah. The Cabal looks after its own, where it can, out of simple self-interest — next month, it could be you in a strange city with a silver bullet between your third and fourth rib.

5.2.15 Making Your Own Lodges

Although some "name" Lodges have had long-term, independent existences, the majority are ad hoc creations designed to exploit a window of opportunity or resources available in a given location for a short time. Lodges exist to support the Cabal, carry out local goals, and recruit new members. To this end, they need to be fairly disciplined and organized, possess significant magical, political, or economic resources in their immediate environment, and provide a suitably attractive (usually quasi-mystical) social identity. To foster unity, and to connect these new Lodges with the Cabal's history, the inner, true Lodge must have a name drawn from Egyptian myth. (The outer, public Lodge may be named anything that will attract the proper membership.) Both player characters and GMs may wish to create Lodges during the course of the game.

5.2.15.1 As Players

Player character Cabalists will likely need to use Administration, Diplomacy, and even Fast-Talk skills to create and stabilize a new Lodge, along with whatever mystical machinations are necessary to create a suitably seductive and mysterious presence in their area. Lodges that take active roles in local politics, economics, or magical rivalries may need protection; this can encompass anything from player-character flying security squads to Merchant rolls to hire thugs and bodyguards. Simply establishing, securing, nurturing, and expanding a Lodge in a tough magical environment like New Orleans or Miami may be the entire story arc of a lower-powered "ground-level" *GURPS Cabal* campaign.

5.2.15.2 As the GM

The GM should insert Lodges wherever they will add something to the story. Unlike Grand Masters (see sidebar, p. 00), a Lodge is an easily digestible plot element amenable to tactical use. A new, unsuspected, or revived Lodge can be as simple as a "thug farm" for quick enemies, or as complex as a chess move in a Grand Master-level game of strategy. A Lodge can even begin as one and, as the PCs investigate further, slowly become the other. The only key to adding a new Lodge is: make it interesting. Yet another Black Brotherhood of Set? Yawn. The Emerald Claws of Sebek? Now, you're talking. Match the method to the name: the Emerald Claws pursue the Emeralds of Hermes Trismegistos (p. WT42–43), are led by a debased Reptile-Lord (p. 00), and kill only with edged weapons — suddenly, what began as a forgettable random enemy generator has added flavor to the game.

5.2.16 Magi In Black

One common mission for Adepts and Novices involves visiting witnesses to an occult outbreak — and convincing them that Nothing Happened Here. Whether they accomplish their goals by bribes, threats, mind-control, or discreet

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disappearance of evidence (or witnesses), the Magi In Black play a crucial role in maintaining the Cabal's monopoly on supernatural power. Of course, one thing that all occult outbreaks have in common is that they have nothing in common. Sometimes the witness is an easily-discredited drunken hysteric. Sometimes the witness is a potential mage or psi who can be recruited into silence. Other times, the outbreak is still going on, and needs to be put down before anything else can be accomplished. And sometimes, of course, the whole thing is a hoax. Or a parallel Cabal op. Or a trap.

5.2.17 Some Rival Societies

A few groups have the power, the resources, or the sheer insanity to challenge the Cabal on its own turf. Any of these groups can provide patronage or aid for anti-Cabalist PCs. Some of them might even be the "good guys" in an anti-Cabal campaign; others will be the sort of allies the term "at an arm's length" was invented for.

5.2.17.1 Chevaliers de la Cr%one

During the War of the Elm, Garravin managed to fracture his rebellious rivals, the Knights Templar. Within the Templars, a few chapters had already given in to the temptations of the darkest magics, worshiping an entity within a gleaming purple crystal skull. When Garravin had their superiors arrested in 1307, the core of these Chevaliers de la Cr%one — the Knights of the Skull — took sail to the American Refuge. They attempted to gain control of the Refuge, but were defeated by the loyal Cabalist Templars and fled further south, to the Templar silver mines in Mexico. There, they established an empire of bloodthirsty demon-worshippers, the Aztecs, and channeled the megadeaths into their crystal master. The Skull Knights served as the secret cadre of the most bloodthirsty pirates, spreading the skull-and-crossbones flag around the globe. Conspiratorial Cabalist history hints that the Skull Knights have attempted to overthrow the United States three times (1805, 1864, and 1933) and have connections throughout the demonic and espionage networks of the Americas. Their operatives have both cooperated with, and engaged in brutal battles against, Albert Garner Kavanagh III's "Headhunter" squads; it is not impossible that Kavanagh has launched a hostile takeover to make himself the Chevaliers' new head.

5.2.17.2 Exodus 22

The Cabal actually created this multinational, militant anti-magic society in the 1950s to simultaneously act against their own supernatural rivals and make the notion of witch-hunting look ridiculous by associating it with extremist "British Israelite" white nationalism. Unfortunately, Exodus 22 (named for the Biblical passage commanding that "thou shalt not allow a witch to live") got out of control when the FBI shot and killed its founder, the Adept Walter Phineas Jessup, in 1970. Now, it has used the supernatural-hunting techniques its Cabal masters taught it to go underground and occasionally launch deadly effective raids against the "ungodly forces of Communist one-world Satanism" — i.e., the Cabal. The Cabal's sources now seem to believe that Exodus 22 may have covert support from some governments, or from a single, nameless shadow group within several governments. This deadly pawn, in other words, may be being played by the other side.

5.2.17.3 Fraternitas Sanctis Leontes

The Catholic Church has historically been ambivalent toward magic, attempting to separate "natural magic" done using the laws and rules God built into the world's operations from "unnatural" witchcraft and diabolism. It soon became apparent to the Church that if its trained theologians and scholars were having trouble telling the two kinds of magic

apart, nobody less wise could be trusted with magic at all. Named for the Sorcerer–Pope Leo I, the Church founded the Brotherhood of St. Leo in secret conclave at the Council of Rouen in 1189 to "assemble all magic under the crown of St. Peter, to assure its use solely for the glory of God." The Leonines may have begun as one of Garravin's tools against the rebel Cabalists, but they soon became an independent power, based initially on the immense Vatican Library storehouse of magical treasures and codices. The Leonines slowly built their brotherhood, striking against only clearly ungodly (or clearly outnumbered) magical beings or covens during the War of the Elm. Under the Borgia and Medici papacies, it almost seemed that the Brotherhood of St. Leo would join the Cabal as an independent Lodge, but the stresses of the Counter–Reformation broke off that promising courtship. The Brotherhood did cooperate with the Cabal in containing the vampiric infestations in the Balkans in the 1720s and 1730s, but in general maintained an attitude of wary hostility. Napoleon's capture of Rome in 1801, the Italian revolutions, and the general decline of the Church's influence in the modern world all sapped the Leonines' power and reach. By the Vatican II era, the Curia saw the Brotherhood as a medieval embarrassment, and Pope John Paul I planned to abolish the fraternity. His death saved the Leonines, however, and over the last two decades, they have showed new life in Latin America, Africa, and Eastern Europe.

5.2.17.4 GKUV

Established in 1924 by Vyacheslav Molotov as an ace in the hole, and justified as an investigation into applied propaganda techniques, the *Gosudarstvennoi Komitet Umstvenniya Vozvisheniye* (State Committee for Mental Elevation) carried out organized research into psionic techniques, psychotronics, and the powers of the human mind. Since psionics was science, rather than a bourgeois superstition like magic, the Soviet state could legitimately support such researches. Despite this ideological cover, the committee led a precarious existence until the death of the suspicious Stalin in 1953. Over the next thirty years, the GKUV grew into a tightly–controlled, redundantly–isolated research institution with its own universities, factories, and power plants centered in the secret "science city" Tomsk–23. The GKUV served as the central clearinghouse and coordinator of all Soviet psychic warfare programs, and efficiently separated the wheat from the chaff. It also helped root out Cabal infiltrators from the Soviet government, which task it performed with increasing efficiency. Steadily expanding into any number of questionable research programs from applied mutagenics to technologically–induced vampirism to hyperdimensional transport, the GKUV carried out increasingly bizarre experiments in a network of stations across Siberia. Every commissar and inspector who visited the GKUV headquarters, or its Academy of Higher Mind Research in Irkutsk, always filed glowing reports and approved higher budget requests.

In retrospect, that probably should have aroused more suspicion than it did. When the USSR collapsed in 1992, the GKUV vanished, completely. So did its agents, its field houses in Prague and Sofia and Hanoi and Havana, and its fleet of psychotronically–hardened warcraft. So did its breeder reactor. So did Science City Tomsk–23. Some of its agents — or people who seem to look like the few surviving witnesses seem to remember its agents looking — have begun resurfacing, in meetings of arms dealers in Aden, and Russian mafiosi in Los Angeles, and in quietly radical scientific conferences in Switzerland.

5.2.17.5 Pavane des Vampires

Headquartered in the Paris catacombs, this society of vampires holds to an ancient, even ossified, social code. For the Pavane, nothing outside its measured, stately boundaries is quite real. Although many of the vampire princes (and even relatively young vampires) have staggering levels of financial and supernatural power, they primarily use it in games of social prestige within their own group. Only the Pavane's nearly sociopathic dislike and resentment of the Cabal's vampire membership prevents them and the Cabal from reaching at least a rough accomodation. This festering hatred

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leads the Pavane rather to balk the Cabal where it can, or whenever it feels the Cabal to be encroaching on its own ancient dignities. Cabalists investigating vampirism, blood magic, necromancy, and kindred arts often find themselves hurled without warning into a gothic nightmare of injured pride and deadly revenge. The Pavane also tends to cull its younger and more hot-blooded members by approving their plans for attacking the Cabal; this only adds to the Pavane's reputation for irrationality and petulance.

5.2.17.6 The Sirri

When Nitocris attempted to overthrow the Egyptian gods, she purged almost the entire priesthood. Some of them went underground; others retreated to isolated temple compounds in the desert. A secret priestly core, however, followed the Nile south into the Sudan, intent on preserving the true faith where Nitocris could never find it. They wound up on the banks of the Niger river, establishing a priest-kingdom within the Bambara and Dogon tribes of the area. After centuries of interbreeding, the Egyptian core assimilated, but the Dogon priests kept Egyptian magic alive within a secret society, the Sirri. By now, the Sirri have spread throughout not only West Africa but into Brazil, the Caribbean, and the United States. The Sirri hated and resented the Cabal for wrecking the holy Egyptian kingdom, and the Cabal's actions in Africa have done nothing to change their mind. The Sirri, like most African magical societies, is only open to men, and specifically to human men. The Sirri do employ strike forces of nonmember supernaturals, especially wereleopards, which goes some way to giving them an operational flexibility their core mindset does not support.

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Brian only let his breath out when the god closed the door above him, and sealed him in.

Even the wizened old forgotten gods of the Romans, as pathetically grateful as they were for a sacrifice done according to the ancient republican style, with nary a whiff of Greek syncretism, could still be dangerous if provoked. And Consus, god of granaries, had certainly seemed like a crotchety sort who probably wouldn't appreciate Brian's true reason for "seeking meditative enlightenment" in his underground temple here in the Iconic Realm.

Because Consus' underground temple was also, of course, a storehouse. Which Brian hoped made it very similar, magically speaking, to the hidden Warehouse where that interfering nullity Selden Graves had stashed the Green Grimoire. Because the Warehouse, to Brian's very great annoyance, could simply not be breached from Earth. And if Graves knew enough to hide the Green Grimoire, he knew enough to protect the Warehouse on the astral plane as well.

But nobody, not even Dr. Selden Graves, can protect a warehouse from the god of warehouses.

Working swiftly, Brian pulled out the linen bag that connected to his Stasis Box back in New Mexico. Opening it, he shook the ashes — scraped from the smoldering embers of the Library of Alexandria eighteen centuries ago — out on Consus' floor, spreading them in the spiral pattern he'd devised, a combined

vever to Legba, god of crossroads, and Candea, Roman goddess of hinges. Whispering a brief invocation to Janus, god of doorways, to seal the deal, Brian stepped through.

And sneezed in the dusty air; even the immense fans he heard laboring stories (miles?) above couldn't fully recirculate the air here.

Eyes adjusting to the dimness, Brian blinked around. Crates and boxes were stacked everywhere. Gold glittered from a wooden spear-haft, mothmen and yeti ramped in taxidermic splendor, forgotten radiation badges slowly blackened under a giant metal cylinder, scrolls spilled from an open box of cedar and acacia.

Shipping containers and fogged-over perspex cubes and wooden coffins and marble amphorae and indefinable tarpaulin-draped shapes and stoutly chained cages lay jumbled and piled across the vast expanse.

Rows of industrial office shelving groaned under whole libraries, with everything from Tibetan termas to Argentine paperbacks interfiled in serried ranks stretching to infinity. At the vanishing point, Brian thought he could barely make out the superstructure from a World War Two destroyer.

Somewhere a rat — a very large rat — skittered.

Brian began to wish he'd been able to find out where in the Warehouse the Green Grimoire was.

He began to wish he dared cast a spell here, with the air almost stiff with magical alarms and thaumic leakage and Hermes knew what.

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He began to wish he'd packed a lunch.

The Cabal is designed to be as flexible as possible for the GM. The presence of a centuries-old secret society, whose members and motivations are shrouded in mystery, provides a limitless pool of sinister NPCs, nefarious plots, and powerful magical items. It can be an evil organization, consisting of worshipers of Things who are bent on the destruction of the human race, or it can be a neutral, but powerful force that is simply seeking understanding of the supernatural world. It might even be the ruthless defender of ignorant mankind against far worse threats than itself. And somewhere in the Cabal, there are Lodges that fit any of these descriptions.

Whatever its nature, the Cabal can be used as the underlying connection for an entire string of supernatural horror adventures. It can often be difficult to explain the PCs' continued presence in a string of supernatural events, but contact with the Cabal will provide a reason for their prolonged involvement. Alternately, the long-term investigation of the Cabal and its nature (including the possibility of the PCs becoming members) can power an epic, and diverse, campaign in itself. This chapter provides information on how the Cabal can be integrated into specific campaign styles. It also provides specific frames that the GM can flesh out into a full-length campaign.

6.1 Defining the Cabal

6.1.1 Size

The first question to ask when bringing the Cabal on stage, or even into the wings, is the question of scope. How big is the Cabal? How much power does it have, and how much does it have to rely on tools, manipulation, and persuasion? A thin network of magi and supernaturals stretched around the world, desperately concealing the reality in moldering Egyptian papyri, is an entirely different animal from an immense conspiracy holding the world in its talons as it reaches for ultimate power and ultimate truth. Not necessarily a less dangerous, or less desperate, or less ruthless animal, but a different one.

6.1.1.1 Everything Starts Small

A small Cabal is a manageable Cabal. This will help GMs who want their players to be able to actually defeat the conspiracy, or at least break it into pieces. It will also make Cabalist PCs more able to directly influence the big picture, perhaps even rising to the Inner Circle and taking over the Cabal completely. A small Cabal has to work through cutouts (like, for example, "false flagged" PCs who think they're doing the local Shriners a favor) and at a remove. They will have less control over the results of their schemes than a larger Cabal with more brains and hands to throw at the problem. By brainwashing an archaeologist here, vampirizing an MI-5 agent there, a small Cabal can "cherry-pick" its opponents; it must be a nimble league rather than an overwhelming juggernaut. Such a Cabal may have to use Middle Circle Cabalists as global troubleshooters, and leave the intense magical research to a small faculty of crippled, dead, or otherwise retired field agents.

6.1.1.2 Primus Inter Pares

A medium-sized Cabal, assuming it keeps its Hermetic monopoly and at least a basic cadre of supernatural beings, can hold its own against any other Illuminati group. It might be one of a group of similar occult powers, or the first among equals in the Secret Wars. It's big enough to need to react to any danger in the Four Realms, but not quite big enough to

do so. PCs working for the Cabal can do a lot of "just in time" saving of reality or crushing of an enemy in this structure. A medium-sized Cabal is a nice compromise between a "rats in the walls" game of low-smoldering failure and few resources, and an overstuffed "cogs in the machine" game choked with brilliant, enigmatic, and powerful Cabalist NPCs.

6.1.1.3 Lords of Everything

Although, of course, an enormous, global Cabal with limitless funding, total access to any important site, and legions of gifted supernatural specialists on call can be a wonderful patron for elite problem-solving PCs used to Armani robes and Tiffany chalices. ("The name is Dee. John Dee.") Freed of worrying about logistics, the GM can concentrate on the story, which can be as vast and dangerous as possible without overwhelming the players. Or, of course, if overwhelming the players is the point — if the Cabal is the enemy in a game of global paranoia and doomed struggle, then a vast Cabal may still be the answer. A vast Cabal can also overwhelm the players from inside — once it gets that big, it gets slow and ponderous, less Golden Dawn and more Pentagon. Games set in the Cabal's vast bureaucracy could range from Kafkaesque psychological terror to the camp paranoia of *Brazil*.

6.1.2 Competition

Size isn't everything. Who else wants to horn in on the Cabal's turf? How many players are at the table in the Great Game of Art and Darkness? The feel of the campaign, and the stories you can tell, will vary depending on the answer to the question of competition.

6.1.2.1 Clear Shots

A Cabal with no competition is not necessarily sitting pretty. As mentioned in *Lords of Everything*, above, it can become fat and ossified, vulnerable to a tiny band of ragtag player-character rebels from within or without. It may also succumb to imperial overstretch, doing everything badly while the world goes to Hell around its ears. Or it could overreach, and be destroyed for its hubris by the Aethyrs, or by Calling Up That Which It Could Not Put Down.

6.1.2.2 The Mirror Crack'd

The other opponent for a Cabal with no external rivals is, of course, internal ones. The Cabal already has a number of stress fractures in it — paranoid Inner Circle vs. ambitious Middle Circle, magi vs. psionics vs. supernatural creatures — and any number of basic rivalries built right into the structure. The trickling feuds between Grand Masters can flare up at any minute, or two Lodges' vendetta could spill over into the entire Cabal. A good setting for a paranoid, house of mirrors, watch your back campaign, the factional Cabal is probably a fairly realistic portrait of what a group of egotistical magi and ravenous monsters would actually be like.

6.1.2.3 All the Agents

Whether in a gritty game of war to the knife over power, or in a pure pulp battle of heroes vs. monsters, the Cabal may only have mortal enemies. With a monopoly on functioning magic, and all the ghoulies and ghosties on its side, the Cabal's only competition may be governments, or megacorporations, or churches, or any other batch of mortals involved in the way the world really works. In a game of "mortals vs. magic," again the players can be on either side. The tiny cross-disciplinary FBI-CIA-ONI team assembled by Dr. Selden Graves (sidebar, p. 00) to root out magical conspiracy

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would make an ideal PC group. Or, the PCs can easily be one knot of supernatural beings hunted with grim determination and cutting-edge military hardware by a hostile government. The thematic simplicity of this "magic vs. muscle" model helps clear the decks for either pure four-color struggle, or for convoluted plotting. A variant might be a GKUV-centered campaign of "magic vs. mind."

6.1.2.4 The Superhuman Crew

In the default Cabal presented in this book, the Cabal is not alone on the sorcerous side of the street — other supernatural conspiracies of varying power and malevolence compete for the world's stock of mana and magic. This type of competition works well for wide-ranging, fast-changing games of high politics and low cunning. The Cabal can be hit from any angle by any combination of forces; scenarios can likewise run the gamut for Cabalist PCs, and anti-Cabalist PCs can get a little of their sorcerous own back against the heirs of Nitocris.

6.1.2.5 The Shadow From the Abyss

Finally, the Cabal has opponents even more alien, from the djinn to demons to qliphoth. A GM with a great love for Lovecraft can mine his dizzying ancient histories and vertiginous cosmologies for *Things Man Was Not Meant To Know* and for the kind of mad fools who call them up. The Cabal's legacy of evil can ironically have prepared it to save mankind — or simply made it the first bite taken from Outside.

6.1.3 Nature

Yes, but what's it like? Yes, the Cabal has members ranging from brutal serial killer necromancers to pious clerical angelologists — and vice versa. Its Lodges can be devoted to high-minded study or to lucrative drug trading. But, unless the GM plans to foreground its internal discord, the conspiracy as a whole should have a common nature, if only to make the GM's job easier.

6.1.3.1 Cursing The Darkness

The Cabal may be brutal, it may be in league with the worst kinds of killers and monsters on Earth, it may care more about magic than about world hunger — but it's all that stands between humanity and forces so alien that the very concept of Earth would dry up and wither away should they win. Like the Army, the Cabal is an insular organization of killers — but there are Things out there that need killing. To start with.

6.1.3.2 Power Corrupts

The apple has begun to rot. There may still not be any better chance for humanity than the Cabal, but it has become arrogant. The Cabal is willing to risk a whole town of "mundanes" to gain crucial knowledge from a summoned demon lord. The Cabal know the truth, and so they are set free — free to loot stores, or sacrifice virgins, or whatever else the situation might demand. They know better, and they don't care what you think.

6.1.3.3 Evil Overlords

And besides, sacrificing virgins is fun! Why not? The Earth is the Cabal's garden, its sheepfold, its meat locker. They rule by whim and by force — what's the point of spending all that time in graveyards if it doesn't let you rule the world? Hunting humans keeps the werewolves in shape, and it stops them from complaining when the Cabal clear-cuts a forest to make a million dollars to use on an orichalcum-plated temple to Hermes inside the children's hospital.

6.1.3.4 Utter Blasphemy

Well, actually, the Cabal doesn't even care about the Earth. They have the rest of the Realms, and it's clear that's where the action is. Or perhaps they've grown bitter and hateful looking for immortality and decided to end it all. The Cabal pours the qliphoth onto the Earth and giggles like a madman as the cities begin to burn.

6.2 Defining the Game

6.2.1 Character Involvement

In addition to defining the Cabal, the GM (possibly in cooperation with the players) needs to decide the characters' role in the Cabal's machinations. Are they sand in the gears or ghosts in the machine?

6.2.1.1 Fighting the Cabal

There's no question that the Cabal makes a dandy opponent for any right-thinking servant of decency and order. It is, after all, a collection of creatures that have at best turned their backs on humanity, and at worst live to prey upon us. Compounding that, the Cabal works conspiratorially, hiding the truth and lying to outsiders — and then justifying its actions by claiming that mortals don't know the truth.

6.2.1.2 Meeting the Cabal

Conversely, the Cabal can be on the sidelines, or across the table, from the PCs. In a "first among equals" game, the heroes may need the Cabal's assistance to take down the Bavarian Illuminati child-prostitution ring in Belgium — and then turn around and help Bavaria hunt down and stake the vampire who killed their pawn Olof Palme. The Cabal's role can change from case to case, or over time as the PCs grow to know more about the sides people take in the secret struggles.

6.2.1.3 Serving the Cabal

The heroes may even learn enough that they wish to join the Cabal, and do the Cabal enough favors (or gain enough raw power) that the Cabal welcomes them in. It's got a great pension plan, mostly because it never has to pay it out. The PCs may decide to help the Cabal as the lesser of five evils, or come to believe fervently in the Great Work of Perfection. Alternately, the player characters can be Cabalists from day one. Hey, it's a tough world out there, and the Cabal stands by its man. And vampire. And mermaid. And troll. Of course, a dewy-eyed Lodge might stumble upon evidence that the Inner Circle has gleefully sold humanity to the djinn in exchange for the Flower of Eternal Life from the lost isle of Dilmun — and become the Cabal's steadfast opponents.

6.2.2 Cabal Involvement

Just as important as the role of the player characters in the campaign is the part played by the Cabal. Is it an extra, a guest star, a supporting actor, or the stage, set, and script all at once? As the game goes on, the GM can easily increase the Cabal's role; getting it smoothly off stage will be trickier without catastrophe. Which may be the idea, of course.

6.2.2.1 A Fleeting Glimpse

The Cabal shows up once, and that's good enough. Perhaps it's a weak version of the Cabal, or it's the GM's way of warning the players to leave that particular red herring alone. (Note to GMs: This does not work.) An interesting variant on this would be to set the game during one of the Cabal's great distractions, like World War Two or the War of the Elm. The PCs go about their business, while the Cabal struggles overhead unable to interfere but always looming ominously.

6.2.2.2 A Figure in the Fog

The Cabal is just one of the many conspiracies, Illuminati, secret governments, shadow armies, and so forth in the campaign. It shows up when the PCs need to battle a wizard in the astral plane, or when they visit Cairo, but mostly it stays out of the limelight and makes creepy noises from offstage. This version can also work if the GM somehow splinters the Cabal; either setting the game in the Dark Ages or in the dark near future when the Cabal's internal strains have blown it apart, causing the Big Crash. Everywhere the PCs go in the occult underground, they'll see the signs of the fallen Cabal — and everywhere they'll find squabbling Lodges claiming to hold the secret to restoring it.

6.2.2.3 The Center of the Onion

This campaign begins as a conventional horror game of some sort, with monsters haunting the sewers and vile sorcerers stalking the forest preserves. (It might even ostensibly start as a non-horror game, with the players dutifully believing the GM is running an espionage or steampunk campaign.) Slowly, the PCs piece together the evidence, slowly they attract the Cabal's attention. Eventually, they begin to discover the Truth about the Cabal, and probably react to it badly. This can serve as the backbone of a true epic, complete with a climactic battle on the Sword Bridge or the destruction of Thoth's Library in Briah.

6.2.2.4 Everywhere You Want To Be

In this campaign, the Cabal is clearly the center and the star. Especially if the PCs are Cabalists, the Cabal is everywhere and everywhen. Paranoid conspiracy games can reach this point rapidly and still have a lot of room to follow the individual tangles of the Cabal's thousand plots.

6.2.3 Power Levels

With their nearly infinite potential cast, *GURPS Cabal* games can support a wide range of potential power levels, from urban victims to astral demigods. See the *Rank and Power* sidebar on p. 00 for another look at this issue.

6.2.3.1 Night Stalkers: 100 points

"Good morning, Jim. The man you're looking at is the Egyptian pharaoh Ramesses IX. This morning, he showed up on the surveillance cameras at O'Hare Airport, and the Director wants an explanation before the President visits Chicago on Tuesday." Player characters here are either talented mortals (government agents, two-fisted archaeologists, eccentric millionaires) or most likely Outer Circle members of the Cabal. Lower-powered games generally privilege investigation, if only because characters aren't tough enough to just bull into situations like idiots.

6.2.3.2 Ghostbusters: 150–200 points

"That's the ninth corpse that's washed up in the Thames this week, Lady Valentine. The members of your Etheric Inquiry Society are the only people I know who don't fear the Golden Dawn — won't you help me?" At this level, there's enough give in the point totals to support spirit mediums, special ops, and Cabalists of Adept or Theorist degree; in other words, people who know just enough to get into deep trouble. Some undead can be viable PCs at this level, too.

6.2.3.3 Vampire Slayers: 250–300 points

"Look, I just found it, okay? It was lying right there in this guy's dream, and it looked cool, so I picked it up. Dude, I told you before that I just thought it was a severed head; I didn't know it was yours. Yeah, I could probably find that guy's dream again tonight. But it'll cost you." At this level, PCs can be advanced Middle Circle Cabalists, or can begin mixing and matching — you can have werewolf warlocks, or vampirized Navy SEALs. Anti-Cabalist forces need progressively bigger mojo; top CIA psychics, or the Vatican's elite strike force of holy assassin-knights. Martial arts masters and pulp heroes can kick the mayhem up a notch or three.

6.2.3.4 Hellraisers: 400–500 points

"According to the Gnostic Utterances of Ibrahim ibn-Daud, the enormous phoenix that lives inside the Earth is about to hatch, splitting the planet open like a melon. You'd better get a good day's sleep." Now you're talking. PCs can be Philosophers and Masters, Cabalists with power and powerful agendas. Major undead and supernaturals can be PCs or villains without overbalancing the game; the scenarios can be big and bold and the obstacles huge. It's hard to maintain paranoia at this point, although horror and danger are still possible as long as there are Things waiting Outside.

6.3 Defining the Campaign**6.3.1 Genre**

Without going wildly into literary theory, genre is the general kind of story you're telling, and the broad run of things you can expect to see. It sets the ground rules, and points the whole thing in a direction. Of course, the boundaries between genres — and between genres, modes, and backgrounds — remain fluid. Think of genre as less a laser beam than a big, broad searchlight.

6 Chapter Five: Cabal Campaigns

6.3.1.1 Horror

Horror games are supposed to be scary. The GM and the players should work together to build a mood of fear and suspense. The Cabal won't be pleasant, and its enemies may be even less so. The undead, and the "major monsters" like vampires, werewolves, and so forth, may get more screen time than the humans. Human magic should be bloody and unpleasant, and psionic powers should reveal madness. See *GURPS Horror* for horror-specific campaign guidelines.

6.3.1.2 Fantasy

Fantasy games are explicitly about the unreal, about magic and things that simply can't exist. A very broad genre, it goes from darkness to wonder and back again. The Cabal is a magical thing in a magical world; it opens doors to marvels undreamt of. That's not necessarily a good thing. Wizards and warlocks can be the stars of a fantasy Cabal game, and the "fantasy races" such as the fae, trolls, and serpent-lords may get more screen time. See *GURPS Fantasy Campaigns* for fantasy campaign guidelines.

6.3.1.3 Conspiracy

Conspiracy games are about uncertainty, the fun of discovery, and the frisson of being watched. Nothing is what it seems, and everybody has a secret. The Cabal in a conspiracy game is just that, a cabal with hidden goals and even more closely hidden powers. The GM draws the players into a web, revealing answers that ask still more questions. Keep the power level low, all the better to keep in the dark — treat psionics with kid gloves, or prepare to unravel reality when they get too close. See *GURPS Illuminati* for the last word on conspiracy gaming.

6.3.2 Mode

If genre is the searchlight, the mode is the filter you slip over the lens to give it color or definition. The mode is how you approach the genre, what your goals are, and what flavor you'll add. Modes are like adjectives; you can use more than one, but it's a good idea to avoid too many at once.

Action: It's all about the adrenaline! Physical chases, desperate battles, explosive climaxes, death traps and hairsbreadth escapes. Action works well in military or special ops games: Cabal commandos in Congolese jungles, or Black Ops hunting Cabal vampires across the Chicago El tracks. Action fantasy is "hack and slash."

Camp: Every cliché is exaggerated, every soliloquy is declaimed at full throat, every story overflows with Lush Capital Letters. Whether played for postmodern irony or pure sense of wonder, camp is about forgetting yourself in glowing black and white. Or, as in the case of Lord Dunsany, in glorious Technicolor purple.

Cinematic: The scene is sacred and realism takes the back seat. There are always just seconds left on the bomb; every vampire attacks the hero's girlfriend; all lost tombs are full of deadly traps somehow still in perfect working order after the last three millennia.

Cosmic: Lovecraft was right — there's something Outside, and it doesn't care about us. Human concerns don't matter; the true fight occurs on a scope we can barely understand, and we only dodge the fallout as best we can. The edges of reality fray, worlds explode, and histories vanish as the Cabal struggles feebly against inevitable entropy.

Dark: Everything is for the worst in this worst of all possible worlds. Religion is a sham, governments are corrupt at best and bestial at worst, the Cabal and its enemies are equally monstrous and inhuman. All magic is black magic, all power comes with a price, all decency is weakness or lies.

Dramatic: The story is sacred. Everything that happens in the game has a purpose, and there are no silly excesses. Nobody picks holes in the CIA agent's theory that black magicians started World War II, because it's an important part of the story line.

Exploration: The fun of the game is the finding out of new stuff. In a horror game, it's encountering uncanny new monsters; in a fantasy game, it's visiting strange new planes of existence; in a conspiracy game, it's discovering another cool story about the Kennedys. The journey is the destination, and the more scenery the better.

Fortean: The world is not just stranger than we imagine, it's stranger than we can imagine. Hermetic wisdom is no closer to the truth than orthodox science. There may not be any truth, but rather many competing truths each dumping rains of carp on us and randomly painting things blue. Coincidence is causation and everything is weird if you look at it right.

Gothic: Human concerns, especially human emotions, are central. How humans react to the fury of nature, or the oppression of convention, or to the icy hand of death, tells the story. Passion is the key to experience; the great tragedy of becoming a vampire is not becoming undead but never again seeing the sunrise with your true love.

Gritty: It's not quite realistic — in a realistic game, after all, there aren't any vampires and magic doesn't work — but it rigorously privileges realism. Shoot a Cabalist, and go to prison. The evil of the Cabal plays out on the grimy streets its werewolves stalk. Seeking the glory of the astral plane means neglecting your kids. Glamorous magical drugs lead to crushing addiction, shuddering withdrawal, and a pool of vomit in the pentacle.

Investigative: The focus is solving puzzles. Who slaughtered those six prostitutes? How do you track down and capture a wyvern in secrecy? What happened to Amelia Earhart over the Pacific Ocean? Why does Mr. Beamish wear tinfoil in his hat — and does it work? PCs may be police detectives, CIA analysts, Cabal troubleshooters, or anyone who really wants to find things out.

Paranoid: Trust no one. The Cabal is up to no good, and its agents are everywhere. If you're a Cabalist, that goes double — and the agents of the Sirri, and the GKUV, and the Mossad, and the djinn are everywhere, too. Your mentor is planning to sacrifice you to the qlippoth. Your students plan to kill you and devour your magical force. Even in a paranoid game, many GMs and players prefer a "no treason" contract for the player characters, if only so the poor PCs can sleep some time.

Postmodern: Take what you want, wherever you want to. There is no flavor; there are many flavors. The Cabal may add Mayan, and Australian aboriginal, and comic-book imagery to its magic. Today's "chaos magicians" practice postmodern magic. Under its old name, syncretism, so did the Hermetics.

Pulp: This is four-color action featuring larger-than-life heroes and viler-than-vile villains. Pulp takes broad swaths of cinematic, camp, and action and blends them into a game concerned with pace, and narrative thrust, and cliffhanging suspense. Pulp seems to work best as a kind of brash offspring from Victorian; it's a hard mode to capture after WWII.

6 Chapter Five: Cabal Campaigns

Silly: Everything is played for laughs. Silly campaigns can range from the ludicrous, featuring a talking rabbit and a dog policeman battling sorcerers and pirates, to the farcical, complete with door–slamming sulks and rival magicians accidentally, and uncontrollably, changing into each other. See *GURPS Discworld* for prime material for humorous gaming.

Splatter: Most common in cinematic action horror, where the mummy always messily devours NPCs on screen as the PCs flee, splatter focuses on the raw physicality of gore. Splatter is gaming as medical lesson, complete with sawn–up cadavers. The Cabal's bloodthirstier (and sloppier) members show to good effect here.

Technothriller: It's all about the toys. Although technothriller borrows the narrative thrust and suspense mode of the pulps, there's no need to rush to action without lovingly inventorying our weaponry. Finding awesome psychotronic tech, or devising a fiendishly perfect decanic ritual, or setting up a textbook ambush on a vampire lord — that's the fun of technothriller gaming.

Victorian: Well, yes, ancient Tantric wisdom might give us a weapon against those Cabal blackguards, but dash it, there are ladies present! Heroes should be gentlemen, or if not, have the common courtesy to be heroic somewhere else so that decent folk needn't be disturbed. Right always defeats might, and who's right is not in question.

Wainscot: The point of wainscot, or secret world, games is the interface between the hidden and the visible, the occult and the mundane. Like the rats in the walls behind the wainscotting, the Cabal skitters about in society's blind spot, raiding and manipulating it to good effect. The creative friction between the real world and the surreal world of the Cabal drives a wainscot game to have lots of involvement with the mundane, mortal, and temporal.

6.3.3 Background

Background determines where and when the campaign takes place. This determination helps establish the cultures present and involved, the resources available, and the most dangerous menaces in the campaign.

6.3.3.1 Historical

The campaign takes place in Earth's past. With four thousand years of history — or more — behind it, there's lots of room to explore. The Cabal has been everything from global overlords to persecuted rebels in its day. GMs who want to tell war stories can set games in World War II or the Crusades; those who want to remove the annoyance of automatic weapons and computers can set their game in the simpler era of John Dee's London or Pharaonic Egypt.

6.3.3.2 Time–Traveling

Sometimes there's just so much cool history, you have to see it all. The PCs can be an exploratory Lodge of the Cabal exploring the Gates of Thoth, or the stouthearted men of the Order of the Hourglass (p. TT76–79) dedicated to rooting out the evil of the Cabal throughout history. GMs wishing to run a time–traveling Cabal game, or even to use a lot of time travel in a more centered campaign, should check out *GURPS Time Travel*.

6.3.3.3 Multiplanar

A multiplanar campaign takes advantage of the broad canvas of the Four Realms. Such campaigns will likely wind up with a strong fantasy feel to them. This will work especially well with either a small Cabal exploring the planes, or with a grand epic campaign pitting the PCs against some vast paradimensional force such as the qliphoth, or the bloodthirsty gods of the first Indo-Europeans, or an Atlantean thieves' guild — or the Cabal.

6.3.3.4 Dreamland

A subset of the multiplanar background, a dreamland campaign takes place primarily in the world of dreams. The Cabal and its opponents duel for the world's dreams in the ultimate in silent warfare. The GM may wish to very much downplay the rest of the Inner Realms, and recast them all as subdivisions of Nod. The PCs can be dream warriors, battling nightmare in the slumbers of the innocent, picaresque little Nemos sailing through the Jungian worlds of color and danger, or Cabalists seeking the secrets of the sub-creations in the dreams of madmen and geniuses.

6.3.3.5 Modern

This campaign takes place in the modern day on Earth, give or take a few decades. Global communications, jet transport, and turbulent headlines can empower a globe-trotting game of tomb-robbers, mercenaries, spies, or smugglers. High technology and heavy firepower balance the odds for anti-Cabalists, but modern decadence, disasters, and skepticism keep the Cabal in the game. The modern background gives a crucial home turf advantage to the conspiracy game; even a fantasy or horror game will have elements of conspiracy in the modern day between logical necessity and political cynicism.

6.3.3.6 Urban

A subdivision of modern gaming, the urban background focuses the attention on one city, usually a large one, and usually its meaner streets and more dangerous areas. The combination of decadence and industry, of crime and neglect, of police brutality and drug warfare brings horror front and center again. Urban fantasy, meanwhile, is a wainscot background that postulates a secret, more brightly colored, world amidst the asphalt jungle.

6.3.4 GURPS Black Ops

Against a global conspiracy of undead monstrosities and sorcery-slinging maniacs, the only weapon is the Black Ops. Dr. Selden Graves (sidebar, p. 00) is likely a key member of Argus in a *GURPS Black Ops–Cabal* crossover game. The Black Ops may be a little disoriented by the Inner Realms at first, but that's why we have a Tech division. Alternatively, perhaps Argus and the Black Ops are a front that the Cabal has set up to fight off the Grey invasion without endangering the secret of magic. That's why they tell the Ops that the "Lodges" they go up against are rogue self-deluding psionics. When the Black Ops figure out they're being played, do they turn on Argus and the Cabal — even if it means letting the Greys in?

6.3.5 GURPS Warehouse 23

The Cabal either runs the Warehouse — in which case it's second only to Cairo as the ultimate prize in the Cabal's internal politicking — or they desperately want to find out who does. Any or all of the contents of the Warehouse could spark entire *GURPS Cabal* campaigns. GMs wishing to use the Chevaliers de la Croix (sidebar, p. 00) desperately need to see the description of the Crystal Skull on pp. WT46–47. The Cabal is also very interested in who, exactly, carved the so-called Emeralds of Hermes Trismegistus (pp. WT42–43), and the Wheel of Ptah Lodge (p. 00) would gladly kill a whole school bus full of orphans for a look at the Warghetz Papers (p. WT62).

6.3.6 GURPS Illuminati

The Cabal probably takes the ecological niche of the Adepts of Hermes in a *GURPS Illuminati* campaign, secret masters of magic against the political muscle of the Bavarians (secret backers of Exodus 22 from the sidebar on p. 00), the financial depth of the Gnomes of Zurich, or the technological spiderweb that is the Network. The Cabal claims to have founded the Merovingians, Cathars, Templars, and the *Prieuré de Sion*; the Society of Assassins are likely tools of the djinn, and the UFOs are probably ultraterrestrial joyriders.

6.3.7 GURPS Psionics

Not only does *GURPS Psionics* have a lot of great psychotronic tech for the GKUV to steal or invent or both, it also has a lot of great game advice for "secret psi" games, which have much in common with "secret magic" games featuring the Cabal. Its Phoenix Project campaign setting is not immediately compatible with *GURPS Cabal* — the Psiberocracy (p. P121) is American, not former-Soviet, for example. However, the GM who wants high psionic drama can modify it with only a little work. The Eugenic Security Police (p. P121) is essentially the GKUV's opposite number, although the GKUV eventually took on the roles the more paranoid Psiberocracy split off to the Psibercorps (p. P122–123). Both the Overmind Institute (p. P124) and the Phoenix Project itself (pp. P124–125) would make interesting opponents for the GKUV, if the Cabal wanted to open up a "second front" in the psychic wars. Conversely, the Phoenix Project would definitely want to investigate and shut down the Cabal if it discovered Cabalist psionics in league with vampires and black magicians. So would the Psiberocracy, to be sure. Biotech Chulan (p. P125) is probably another Cabal front group, much like Aeon Laboratories (sidebar, p. 00). The Human Alliance (p. P126) may be a splinter group, a rival, or a blood ally of Exodus 22.

6.3.8 GURPS Voodoo

The easiest way to incorporate the *GURPS Voodoo* Shadow War into the Cabal as presented here is to make the Leopard Society (p. VO20) the "outer name" of the Sirri. The other Voudunista groups can have the same relationship to the Sirri that they do to the Leopards, or the GM can draw some of them into the Sirri more directly. The Lodges, of course, are the Cabal — the name alone should be a dead giveaway. The Corruptors combine the less-savory members of the Cabal with the qlippoth; in the Shadow War setting, the qlippoth infiltration of the Cabal has gone much farther than even the Brotherhood of Phlebas fears. For guidelines on using the Ritual Magic system from *GURPS Voodoo* in a Cabal campaign, see the sidebar on p. 00.

6.3.9 Historical GURPS Crossovers

GMs and players can find much inspiration in the long line of *GURPS* sourcebooks covering historical eras. The following are only the most relevant; the Cabal has been everywhere.

6.3.9.1 GURPS Atlantis

This sourcebook tells another exciting version of the Deluge and the collapse of the First Creation. In fact, it tells it three times. If the GM wants to incorporate the "Heirs of Minos" conspiracy from this book into a *GURPS Cabal* campaign, or vice versa, it will probably be easier to strip the psionics out of the Cabal than to rewrite the Minosians' history completely.

6.3.9.2 GURPS Egypt

The Cabal was born in the sands of Pharaonic Egypt, and this sourcebook has all the dusty details for GMs or players looking for more flavor, more tradition, more gods, and more priestly plots and perfidy. The Egyptian magic section and the bestiary alone are worth the price of admission for the GM seeking inspiration and fiendish surprises.

6.3.9.3 GURPS Imperial Rome

Although they spoke Greek and studied Egyptian, the Cabalists in Hermetic Alexandria were Romans. The Cabal shows much of the Roman ruthlessness, and its system of patrons and clients could be taken right out of Julius Caesar's political manual. GMs wishing to set games during the Cabal's first conquest of the world will find plenty of decadent orgies, bloodthirsty cults, and strange gods in this book. Those who wish to emphasize the Cabal's grim determination to rule everything in sight can use it to Romanize their Cabal with gladiatorial bouts between Adepts seeking admission into the Middle Circle, or with scorched-earth campaigns against the Sirri "barbarians" in the heart of Africa Ulterior.

6.3.9.4 GURPS Arabian Nights

For the war against the djinn, there's no better sourcebook than *GURPS Arabian Nights*. It covers the medieval Islamic period of the Crusades in eye-popping detail, and adds the all-important Arabic layer to any scenarios set even in modern Cairo. Full of elliptical lore, mighty magical items, and the looming terror of the djinn, it will definitely assist any GM running a medieval Cabal campaign — or one inspired by Tim Powers' *Declare* or David Lean's *Lawrence of Arabia*.

6.3.9.5 GURPS Swashbucklers

This sourcebook gives the crucial details for John Dee's era in Britain, the pirate wars of the Chevaliers de la Croix, and the feel of Renaissance rapiers and derring-do that so permeate the Cabal's refounding era. Any Cabal campaign set in the first great Age of Exploration needs this book. The GM may wish to add flying galleons, the birth of voodoo, or a mysterious passage through the Bermuda Triangle to the Pearl-Bright Ocean for a game of pirates and pentacles sailing the Four Realms and the Seven Seas.

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6.3.9.6 GURPS Steampunk

The Victorian heyday of the Cabal comes under the lens in this sourcebook, which could almost double as a handbook solely on Victorian England. However, it conveys plenty of the sense of adventure the Cabal's explorers felt mapping the Inner Realms; Erasmus Rooke would be right at home with any of the mad science in this sourcebook, and surely a mechanical man would be welcomed into the Cabal. The Oculus Dei conspiracy from the world of Providence (pp. STM138–141) would be natural enemies of the Cabal, which stands as an insufferable blasphemy against their beliefs in God and freedom. (Whether the much more conservative Brotherhood of St. Leo would support or hinder the Oculus Dei is another kettle of fish entirely.) The prospect of a steampunk Oculus Dei armed with secret technology battling the opiated sex–magics of the Golden Dawn is almost too perfect.

6.3.9.7 GURPS Atomic Horror

This is the sourcebook for the great second wave of ultraterrestrial visits to Earth, this time in the guise of UFO pilots rather than fairy revelers. It also has plenty of weird monsters to kill, or sacrifice to the gods, or recruit, depending on one's campaign flavor. One area of 1950s paranoia that this book scants is the first wave of anti–occult feeling in the U.S. corresponding to the emergence of Wicca and other neopagan religions in America. Here, *GURPS Cabal* can add occultism to the threats faced by the Theoretical Science Foundation — the Thing From Another World was a vampire, after all. The atomic 1950s are also the era when the national security state begins to purge the Cabalists from their soft positions of influence — did Joseph McCarthy know just how close his "witch hunt" was getting to the truth?

6.3.10 Sample Campaign Frames

6.3.10.1 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 Wodehouse or 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* manue, 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.

6.3.10.2 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. While democracy putrefies in apathy, corruption, and decadence, billions of people starve as slaves to syphilitic, nuclear-armed warlords on two continents. Demons, and still more alien Things, squabble over places at the coming feast. And 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 characters are special ops 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 fear ignorance more. Non-Cabalists should begin with robust survival and intelligence skills, to keep them alive until they find out enough of the truth to use countermagic.

Power Level: 150–250 points.

Genre: Horror, conspiracy.

Modes: Gritty, investigative, possible splatter or technothriller.

Background: Modern, globetrotting, possible urban.

Notes: This is conspiracy theory as modern noir. The players 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, very alien. Played with more emphasis on the dramatic, this could become a very dark modern pulp game.

6.3.10.3 Decline and Fall of the Roman Vampire

Civilization is going to pieces behind us, the werewolves howl across the slowly-freezing Rhine, and we're 500 stadia deep in djinn country. But we're Romans, by Christ and Mithras and the unconquered Sun itself! We can fight our way clear around the world if we must, in order to see the green fields of Gaul one last time. More than that, we're Cabali — maybe the last ones left after Alexandria burned again. We're all that's left of order and sanity in the world, and we'll crucify anyone who dares say different, and drink his blood to keep marching.

Character Creation: PCs, powerful magi or supernatural beings, are the nucleus of one of the splintered Cabals after the

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death of Aurelian, as the Empire collapses in the 4th or 5th century A.D. The human-based undead may be revenant Roman legionaries with cinematically impressive combat skills.

Power Level: 300+ points.

Genre: Horror, fantasy.

Modes: Dark cinematic or dramatic action, with strong possibilities for splatter.

Background: Historical, possibly multiplanar.

Notes: This is a swords and sorcery setting based on the dark fantasies of Glen Cook, David Drake, Robert E. Howard, and Richard L. Tierney. The game is constant, high-powered combat against any and all comers.

7 Chapter Six: Cabal Characters

Now that he had attained the lofty degree of Practitioner, Brian had discovered, Dee expected him to start running his own show and recruit his own agents. With, of course, no resources except the power of Dee's name, Brian's knack for kabbalistically summoning fiscal numinae on ATM screens, and a few magical odds and ends stashed safely back in Albuquerque.

With a reluctantly stifled sigh, Brian lowered his glass to the table and let his eyes meet those of everyone around it.

An earnest fellow in a sleek black turtleneck and a sleeker black goatee that just screamed "Adept wannabe" daintily sipped at a Cointreau. Next to him, a gorgeous, if overly thin, woman with a labrys pendant and suspiciously long fingernails stared into her absinthe with what Brian suspected was supposed to be an air of mysterious detachment.

The pale, hooded figure in the booth's darkest corner hiccuped and covered his yellowish fangs with his hand before washing down the obstruction with something that smelled suspiciously like embalming fluid. The fae across from him, thank Hermes, had finally stopped complaining about the beer.

The mummified cat, as always, said nothing, blinking slowly as the Kahlua fumes reached its dark, leathery nose.

Brian signaled to the waitress for another vodka and tonic. Once again, he decided that the only thing he had done right in the entire process was to have his would-be coven all meet in a bar.

7.1 Character Types

The following character types primarily concentrate on the characters' roles within the Cabal, although several of them would also work just as well as anti-Cabalist character types. Players might keep in mind that few people (except scions of hoary magical dynasties) start out working for the Cabal; most PCs will have some kind of previous work or life experience to round out their abilities. Some of these past occupations (popular occult writer, Jewish rabbi, U.S. Army "remote viewing" clairvoyant) might be immediately relevant to a *GURPS Cabal* campaign, while others (insurance investigator, mob accountant, electrical engineer) might be more of a stretch. The GM should walk a careful balance between internal story plausibility and campaign fun when deciding which character suggestions require Unusual Backgrounds. Any and all of the character types below will likely have some degree of magic, psionics, or other supernatural powers, whether they support or fight the Cabal.

7.1.0.1 Archaeologist

Seekers of ancient truth may wind up uncovering the hidden story of Cabal manipulations, which is one reason the Cabal supports so many archaeological digs, both official and unofficial. An archaeologist may be a stuffy academic who slowly comes to realize the true nature of history's shadows, or a daring tomb-robber sent in to grab the key artifacts and efface a certain inscription before the tomb is officially discovered.

Advantages: Absolute Direction for those tunnels, Contacts in local governments or universities, Intuition, Language Talent.

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Disadvantages: An archaeologist might have either type of Delusion from extreme credulity ("The ancient Egyptians built Stonehenge") to extreme skepticism ("The Pyramids have no magical significance"); both could be fun to play. Curious, Greed, Jealousy (of other archaeologists), or Secret (tomb robber) might also come in to play.

Skills: Archaeology and History, obviously, along with Area Knowledges, Cartography, Languages, and outdoor skills; Conspiracy Theory for Cabal-knowledgeable scholars; Filch, Explosives, and thief skills for tomb-robbers; Psychometry and Seekersense for psychic archaeologists.

7.1.0.2 Collector

Combine magically-enhanced wealth, access to priceless artifacts, and disregard for others' property rights, and you potentially have any member of the Cabal. Those who take such natural acquisitiveness to extremes often travel to far corners of the Realms to add to their collections.

Advantages: Wealth.

Disadvantages: Greed, even to the point of Kleptomania or Obsession.

Skills: Appreciate Beauty, Merchant, Savoir-Faire (for art shows) or Streetwise (for theft rings), even other thief skills in a pinch.

7.1.0.3 Conspirator

The figure in the shadows, the secret mover and shaker, the man behind the curtain. From the hidden government to the Cabal's men in high places, conspirators are everywhere. Even within the Cabal itself.

Advantages: Rank (in whatever organization the conspirator has infiltrated), Contacts, Status.

Disadvantages: At least one big Secret, of course, along with possible Paranoia.

Skills: Acting, Administration, Detect Lies, Diplomacy, Fast-Talk, Intelligence Analysis, Politics; possibly Conspiracy Theory.

7.1.0.4 Crusader

Destroy all monsters! Dare and Will for the Cabal! Whatever the cause, there's only one way to advance it, with cold steel and hot blood. Whether it's keeping the streets safe for decent humans or crushing the blind fools who dare to thwart the Inner Circle, the crusader knows his cause is right, and the time is right now.

Advantages: Awareness, Combat Reflexes, Fearlessness, and Strong Will. A Leonine Brother or an Exodus 22 Gideonite might have True Faith, any crusader will have a Higher Purpose.

Disadvantages: Bloodlust and Fanaticism aren't disadvantages if your cause is just.

Skills: All combat/weapon skills, Area Knowledges, Tactics, and Tracking for a start.

7.1.0.5 Explorer

Traveling the astral streams or crossing the icy deserts of Mongolia, the explorer blazes the trail for others to follow. Bring back knowledge to strengthen the Cabal — or discover its machinations where no man has gone before.

Advantages: Absolute Direction, some degree of Fit or Toughness, Disease-Resistant, Language Talent, and possibly Alertness.

Disadvantages: Loner and Overconfidence both fit the mold, as might an Odious Personal Habit or two acquired out beyond civilization.

Skills: Cartography, Navigation, and Survival; Diplomacy and Languages also come in handy.

7.1.0.6 Information Broker

Whatever's going on, you know about it. Not only that, you know who really needs to know about it, and who really shouldn't find out. You may sit at the center of your web, or walk the front lines to sniff the wind.

Advantages: Contacts, lots of Contacts; that and a Reputation for honesty and accuracy are the keystones of your career. Cultural Adaptability will widen your net. If you can afford it, be Illuminated.

Disadvantages: Code of Honor (stay bought) and Honesty; almost certainly, an Enemy you've given information on to someone else.

Skills: Area Knowledges, Detect Lies, Fast-Talk, and Streetwise; possibly Cryptography or other thief/spy skills. Depending on your social circle, you may need Carousing or Gambling; Professional Skill (bar owner) is traditional. History and Conspiracy Theory may come in handy for knowing some stories behind the stories.

7.1.0.7 Investigator

Whoever you work for, whether it's the Cabal, the CIA, or the *Weekly World News*, you need to get the lay of the land, find out what's going down, and figure out what to do next. Sometimes that means stopping it; sometimes that means helping it.

Advantages: Alertness, Empathy, Intuition.

Disadvantages: Curious, Overconfidence, Stubbornness.

Skills: Photography, Stealth, Research, Criminology, Occultism, Shadowing, Acting, any other thief/spy skills.

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7.1.0.8 Scion

Within the Cabal, old blood will tell; families steeped in occult knowledge and raised to fight the secret wars have guided the Cabal for centuries. The scion of such a family may be an eager blue-blood or a once carefree student who just got a big surprise on his 21st birthday. Either way, you can't resign from your family.

Advantages: Heir, Status, Wealth; possibly a family Patron or Ally Group. If your childhood was really strange, you may be Unfazeable by now, or have a Racial Memory.

Disadvantages: Any, really, from Laziness ("the Black School has to take me, I'm a legacy") to a grim Sense of Duty.

Skills: Leadership and Savoir-Faire; depending on the family tradition, Occultism, History, or even Politics (Cabal).

7.1.0.9 Servant

With old families come old family retainers. Servants can focus on appearances ("One may be off to battle the forces of blackest diabolism, but that's no excuse for wearing *that* cravat to do so, sir.") or save the day ("I took the liberty, sir, of bringing along your Lordship's amulet of Horus."). Or, of course, the leering valet who's served the family for years may know where all the bodies are buried. Literally.

Advantages: Patron (one's employer), Less Sleep, Manual Dexterity, and the traditional Unfazeable or at least Composed.

Disadvantages: Sense of Duty, lowered Status, generally less Wealth than one's employer. The latter two may lead to Jealousy.

Skills: Administration, Savoir-Faire, Scrounging ("Where did you find scones in the Astral Realm, Jenkins?"), Teamster or Vehicle.

7.2 Character Races

The default *GURPS Cabal* setting assumes, with the Renaissance Hermetic magi, that human beings are the majority of sentient actors; although they may be outnumbered by bacteria or by minor spirits, they remain the "measure of all things" and to some extent the center of the universe. Simple numbers dictate that the majority of the Cabal is, biologically at least, human. The representation of nonhumans in the Cabal is certainly higher than in the mundane world, if only because more nonhumans are exposed to magic and its attendant consequences. This need not be the case in a party of PCs, whether Cabalists or anti-Cabalists. Player characters, by definition, are unusual people to whom unusual (and usually unpleasant) things happen with an alarming degree of regularity.

7.2.1 Humans

Magical or psionic talent can manifest anywhere in the world, in any person. Magery does seem to be inheritable, which leads some magically adept families to practice arranged marriages or even inbreeding to preserve the gift — and the usufructs of Cabal membership and access — within the family line. Although the Cabal is not the tight family affair that conspiracy theorists and some Victorian Cabalists imagined it to be, membership in one of the Cabal's old family

dynasties is still the surest way to wind up a Cabalist. The Cabal is historically centered in European and Mediterranean cultures, so Westerners and Middle Easterners are over-represented in the Cabal compared to the rest of the world. But, like any top research institution, the Cabal actively recruits from outside its traditional membership pool. With the increasing Westernization of the Third World and east Asia, the Cabal's scouts and investigators can find any number of potential members from Lima to Bangkok to Bombay. Many Cabalists also encounter non-Western magi or psionicists in the dream worlds, or elsewhere in the Astral Realm. Although these encounters can be hostile or suspicious, many non-Cabalists willingly join the Cabal when they discover the resources, organization, and information open to members.

The Cabal's human membership does remain heavily skewed toward scholars, writers, parapsychologists, priests (of all stripes), and similarly "academic" magi. The disciplines of magic take, in addition to the gift itself, sufficient drive and leisure time to master the arcana of the field. Cabalists who have to hold down a steady nine-to-five job are very much in the minority, except in the lowest ranks. Why drive a cab, spread blacktop, or file papers when you could be crossing the boundaries of experience and researching the secrets of ancient Chaldea? Most Cabalists can use their magic to supplement their income, and eventually to replace it; many Lodges subsidize their promising members (and their leaders) with donations or trusts.

7.2.2 Nonhumans

The Cabal's nonhuman membership primarily consists of the undead (especially once-human Cabalists), shapeshifters, and various borderline spirits such as the fae. However, "primarily" leaves a lot of ground uncovered. Sentient nonhumans such as yeti, Serpent-Lords, and others bulk out the membership, as do odd one-off entities, magical creations, and the last vestiges of several dying races. Enmity to the Cabal encompasses vampires, djinn, and plenty of other magical malcontents. In short, whatever the players seem excited about should be workable as PCs in a *GURPS Cabal* campaign. Advice for running games with undead PCs appears in *GURPS Undead*, and a GM with either a mixed party or an entirely inhuman one should consult that work.

7.2.3 Spirits

Spirits flourish in Yetzirah and Briah, and have crossed over and dwelt in Assiah from time immemorial. Some Cabalists return from the dead in ghost or spirit form (see p. UN34) others (like Koschei or Garravin) began as spirits with strong ties to Assiah, and in the millennia the Cabal has explored the Realms, it has attracted any number of spirit beings to its ranks. To fully describe most spirits either as PCs or NPCs, it's simplest to begin by defining their abilities outright. These rules were adapted from *GURPS Voodoo*, *GURPS Spirits*, and *GURPS Undead*. In addition, *GURPS Spirits* has substantial coverage of human-spirit interactions, including guidelines for designing, playing, and running spirit-centered games.

7.2.3.1 Attributes

Spirits have the same attributes as humans: ST, DX, IQ, and HT. When confronted in the spirit world, these attributes define what the spirit can and can't do.

Fatigue: In order to interact with the material world, a spirit must spend energy, expressed as a fatigue cost. Fatigue is the most important attribute of a spirit; powerful spirits may have *hundreds* of fatigue points! The average tends to be

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closer to the human norm, however: 10–20 fatigue. Spirits recover fatigue normally (see p. B134).

Special Sources of Fatigue: Spirits can tap into some places or people to obtain fatigue quickly. They can use this siphoned fatigue to replenish their own or to power their special abilities. Within Assiah, ley lines (see p. 00) and decanically resonant locations (see the *Places* under each of *The 36 Decanates*, pp. 00–00) can provide a spirit with additional energy; a ley "tendrils" or minor correspondence can grant 5 fatigue points per day while a major ley node or decanic power spot can give up to 20 (all values as determined by the GM). Spirits can only tap into this energy if they are in the area. Acts of worship from a great number of people can also allow spirits to gain 20–100 additional fatigue points per day, depending on the number of worshippers (roughly one fatigue point per worshipper). Spirits in Yetzirah can draw on the ambient energy of the Astral Realm to grant between 20 and 40 fatigue points per day, depending on how close to "home" (or to a spot with the right decanic "flavor," again as determined by the GM) they are. Spirits in Briah can draw up to 100 points per day, within the same conceptual framework.

Will: This important trait allows spirits to resist attempts to control or expel it, to control and influence others, and to alter its surroundings within the Astral or Iconic Realms.

7.2.3.2 Spirit Abilities

Spirits are invisible and intangible to the physical world; as a general rule, only other spirits can sense them without the aid of magic spells or psi skills. (Dogs, horses, owls, and bees can sense particularly powerful or malevolent spirits.) Beyond this, they have a number of special powers:

Perception: Spirits can see, smell and hear normally. Their sense of touch in Assiah is very limited unless they materialize (see p. 00). They can even taste objects to a limited degree, especially objects that have been offered to them in a ritual. Many spirits enjoy the smell and taste of ritually offered food and drink.

A spirit's senses go beyond the normal human range, however. All spirits have the equivalent of the Empathy advantage, and can sense strong emotions in humans by "seeing" their auras. Through the same sense, they can detect mages, as well as demons and other supernatural beings. To hide from a spirit, such beings must win a Quick Contest of their Will vs. the spirit's Sense roll.

Spirits also have the ability to hear their names whenever they are ritually invoked, regardless of distance or intervening barriers. This can include anything from a medium attempting to channel a departed one's soul, to a sorcerer's ritual of summoning, to an Archangel calling them before a tribunal for judgement.

Movement: Move is determined normally for spirits. Since they aren't bound by physical limits, they can move in any direction, in the air and through solid objects. They can instantly transport themselves into the presence of someone who is ritually invoking their name (see above). A spirit can also "hitch a ride" inside a vehicle, but this costs 1 fatigue per hour to maintain a connection to the vehicle.

Although physical barriers do not impede spirits, many magical wards and blocks will keep them out, such as Pentagram (p. M62), Repel Spirits (p. G85), Astral Block (p. G85), "Utter" spells (p. M78, G93) and similar spells or rituals (such as consecration, exorcism, etc.) at the GM's discretion.

Communication: Spirits can project their thoughts as speech and hear thoughts directed at them. This process works almost exactly like telepathy, except that communication is not stopped by psionic Mind Shields, and neither the spirit nor the people it's communicating with can read thoughts or do anything other than "speak" to each other. Such communication costs the spirit 1 fatigue per short sentence (a few seconds' worth of speech). Evil spirits sometimes use this power to "plant" thoughts in a mortal's head, making them "hear voices." Someone with the Voices disadvantage (p. CI94) may be haunted by one or more spirits. These thoughts can't control a person's actions, but may trigger repressed anger or fear and cause people to do things they otherwise wouldn't.

Dream Travel: Spirits don't sleep or dream themselves, but they can enter the dreams of mortals. Entering or leaving a dream requires a Will roll and costs 1 fatigue. From within a person's dream, the spirit can communicate with the dreamer and even alter the elements of the dream to suit its purposes, but nothing the spirit can do in a dream will affect the dreamer physically. At worst, the spirit can create a terrifying nightmare that causes the victim to make a Fright Check upon awakening. The penalty to the Fright Check is determined by the content of the nightmare and the victim's personality (GM's call). A severe scare *could* harm the victim, and repeated nightmares wear at a victim's sanity.

Possession: Spirits have the ability to displace a living being's soul, thereby taking control of his body. This is resolved as a Quick Contest of Wills, and can only be attempted once per day on any given person. If the spirit wins, he gains control over the body for 3d seconds. This costs 5 fatigue points. On a tie, the victim suffers from the equivalent of the Split Personality disadvantage (with the subject in control, not the spirit) for the same length of time.

The spirit can try to extend the possession by taking a penalty to its Will roll and spending extra fatigue. Taking possession for 3d *minutes* is done at -2 Will and costs 7 fatigue. Attempts to possess for 3d *hours* are at -4 Will and cost 10 fatigue. Possession for 3d *days* has a -8 penalty and costs 15 fatigue. A critical success on the spirit's part or a critical failure by the victim doubles the length of the possession. A critical failure by the spirit or a critical success by the victim costs the spirit 3d fatigue (in addition to the normal cost) and renders it incapable of attempting to possess *anybody* for 3d days.

The subject's state of mind and physical circumstances modify the possession attempt. If the subject's soul has left his body (for example, by astral travel, a Soul Jar spell (p. M73), or through a near-death experience) the spirit's roll is at +8. If the victim is undergoing a painful or terrifying ordeal (torture, rape, starvation, etc.), the spirit is at +6. If the subject is in an altered state of mind (from drugs, alcohol, fever, etc.), the spirit has a +4. Even a willing person gets a resistance roll (representing an instinctive reluctance to losing control), but the spirit's roll is at +10! Each previously successful possession of a particular subject by the spirit gives that spirit +1 to its roll (maximum +3).

When a person is possessed, the spirit's vital energy infuses his body with greater strength, speed and endurance. The possessed body's ST is raised by 1/5 the spirit's ST (not Fatigue), and its DX and HT are raised by 1/8 the spirit's DX and HT, respectively.

The Poltergeist Effect: A spirit can use some of its energy to manipulate objects in Assiah. By spending fatigue, it can move objects, throw punches and perform other physical actions. The fatigue cost is great, however, so most spirits are only capable of affecting small objects for short periods of time.

Each *action* the spirit attempts costs it fatigue. The effective ST and DX the spirit applies in the world determines the cost, and *can* exceed the spirit's "natural" attributes. An action costs 1 fatigue per 2 ST exerted. DX costs 1 fatigue for a

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base level of 10 and 1 fatigue for every +2 DX. With enough fatigue, a spirit can perform a number of effects, slamming doors, writing on typewriters or computers, or even pushing or punching people. A direct attack does thrust–3 damage based on the ST of the effect.

Probability Alteration: Spirits have the power to channel their wills to affect the outcome of an event in any of the Realms. The effects of this power depend on the intended result and the amount of fatigue the spirit spends.

The spirit must first win a Quick Contest of Wills with the subject, unless the spirit is trying to *help* the subject, in which case only an unopposed Will roll is required. A positive or negative modifier to any one roll can be applied on a success, at 2 fatigue per +/-1 (maximum +/-10, for 20 fatigue). This includes short actions, long actions, or such things as rolls on the Jobs Table. Activities that are not normally resolved by random rolls may also be affected in this way, but the GM must assess the base probability for success or failure before assessing the bonus or penalty. The chart on p. B45 can be useful here.

Use of this power requires a great deal of imagination on the part of the GM and players. Anybody who's had a bad day knows the myriad of little things that can go wrong in the course of normal life, and can draw upon those experiences for inspiration.

Materialization: Finally, spirits can assume a material or semi–material form, emerging in Assiah. There are three levels of materialization, ranging from sound effects to actual solidity. Most spirits don't have enough energy to become fully solid, and only powerful spirits can maintain a materialization for any length of time. Full materialization is also dangerous for the spirit because physical attacks can hurt or destroy it while materialized. Within quasi–material realms outside Assiah as such, like Fa'rie or the elemental planes, materialization costs no fatigue. The levels of materialization are as follows:

Sounds: The spirit uses enough energy to produce disembodied sounds. Simple sounds (moans and howls) are easier than complex noises or speech. These are real sounds and can be picked up by microphones and recording devices. In fact, if the spirit wishes, the sounds can *only* be picked up by machines, and not by living creatures (producing disembodied voices on an audio tape or over a radio frequency, for example). Producing simple sounds costs 1 fatigue per 10 seconds. Speech or complex sounds cost 1 fatigue per second, and a Will roll is required to make the right sounds or say the words clearly. A failed Will roll results in incoherent or unintelligible noise.

Visual Effects: The spirit can cause a visual manifestation of its form to appear. This form has no solidity or weight, and is translucent unless the spirit spends extra fatigue to make it appear solid. This costs 1 fatigue per 5 seconds, doubled if the spirit wants to appear solid.

Full Materialization: This effect is very costly, but it temporarily provides the spirit with a physical body. This costs 1 fatigue point for every two levels in *each* physical stat (ST, DX and HT), rounded up. Clothing appears around the subject at no additional cost, but other objects (including weapons and armor) cost 1 fatigue per pound of weight. This energy cost must be paid after each minute. If the spirit has any special powers or advantages, it may use them in material form normally. Spirits in material form are still immune to many of the concerns of mortal beings. They are unaffected by concerns such as starvation, suffocation, fatigue, disease, poison and most weather conditions, although they can be harmed by the same attacks as other physical beings, unless they have special advantages protecting them.

Multiple Forms: Spirits normally always materialize in the same form (their "normal" form). However, they can learn to materialize in forms other than human. They use the Shapeshifting skill (p. CI144) to do so. The spirit's various advantages and disadvantages do not change, and its attributes are determined normally for materialization (above). The spirit can vary its size and appearance. Spirits most often use this ability to appear as animals or strange, inhuman creatures (or to assume human form if their natural form is something other than human).

7.2.3.3 Spirit Weaknesses

Next to being unable to affect the material world without spending fatigue, the biggest limitation faced by spirits is that they have very short lifespans. Every month, a spirit must make a Will roll. A roll of 14 or higher is an automatic failure, and any missed roll reduces HT by one. If HT ever reaches 0, the spirit is destroyed.

Modifiers (these *do* affect the 14 maximum): +2 if the spirit has a compelling reason to stay in existence; +2 if it stays within a suitable place of power (generally within 50 yards of same on Assiah), for the whole month; +1 to +5 if the spirit is being paid respect or worship.

If these cumulative bonuses add up to +3 or more, Will rolls to maintain HT fail only on a roll higher than modified Will or a 17 or 18, whichever is lower. If they total +5 or more, the spirit doesn't have to make a Will roll at all that month!

7.2.3.4 Point Cost

The package above is treated as a 100–point advantage, called Spirit Form. It can be modified by the enhancements and limitations below. Treat any total less than –75% as –75%.

Special Enhancement: Spectral Touch. The spirit can use "touch–only" abilities while insubstantial by interpenetrating with the subject. Any spirit can use Steal HT, Steal ST or the Chilling Touch version of Terror (p. 00) this way, but this enhancement is required to use all other touch–only abilities this way (e.g., Deathtouch, the Pestilence advantage, etc.). +40%.

Special Enhancement: Unlimited Lifespan. The spirit doesn't have to make monthly Will rolls to avoid losing HT, making it effectively immortal. +30%.

Special Enhancement: Physical Form. The spirit has one physical form it can assume at will (like *Materialization* above) for a Fatigue cost of only 1 point, remaining in that form for as long as it wishes. It costs no fatigue for the spirit to return to its normal incorporeal form. The physical form has the spirit's normal Attributes and abilities, plus any advantages the spirit may have that apply to the physical world. The spirit cannot change the appearance of its physical form without materializing another (and paying the full fatigue cost) or having an appropriate advantage or spell. If the spirit's physical form is reduced to 0 HT and it fails a HT roll, it is forced back into spirit form. This enhancement can be taken multiple times for multiple physical forms. +80%

Special Enhancement: Visible. The spirit is normally visible, at no fatigue cost. The advantages (free visual effects) and disadvantages (being visible to normal sight) cancel out. +0% if the spirit is obviously unnatural (glowing, translucent, etc.), +5% if it looks human. +5% if the spirit is only visible to living beings and not machines (cameras, etc.), –5% if the spirit is normally only visible to machines, not living beings (showing up in photographs, on film, etc. but invisible to

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the naked eye).

Special Limitation: The spirit can't produce the effects listed under *Materialization*. –20% for Can't Materialize, –15% for Sounds Only, and –10% for Sounds and Visual Effects Only. Only the –10% level can be combined with Visible. Cannot be combined with Physical Form.

Special Limitations: Missing Power. The spirit lacks a basic spirit ability. Each missing power is a separate limitation: –5% if it can't hear its name being invoked, travel instantaneously to the site of a summoner, or ride in vehicles; –10% if it can't use dream travel, communicate telepathically, sense auras or tap fatigue from places of power and worshippers; –20% if it can't use the poltergeist effect, possession or probability alteration.

7.3 Advantages

7.3.1 Who Wants To Live Forever?

One of the great goals of the Cabal is true, human immortality, as represented by the *GURPS* advantages Immortality (p. CI58) or better still, Undying (p. CI69). This means that those advantages should not be available to human PCs in a "default" *GURPS Cabal* campaign. (Of course, for a suitably hefty Unusual Background cost, a PC could be someone who *somehow* achieved true immortality, and is now being hunted by every single supernatural entity in the Four Realms — *Imagica* meets *The Fugitive*.)

Members of the Cabal use many tools to cheat death while searching for true immortality, however, from repeated Halt Aging and Youth spells (p. M51) to less-than-kind Steal Youth spells (p. M74). In the world of the Cabal, these spells are hard to come by and jealously guarded. Many "one-time only" devices might exist to prolong life, so a character beginning with the Extended Lifespan (p. CI54), Longevity (p. B21), or even Unaging (p. CI69) advantages is perfectly plausible given a "normal" background story within the Cabal. (For PCs built as mortals brought into the Cabal, obviously such an advantage would still require an Unusual Background.) Somewhat more common are individually crafted longevity rituals, synthesized by the ancient sorcerers of the Cabal, requiring repeated application of some rare ointment or ingestion of some unhallowed food. These items are almost always difficult to come by, illegal, or just plain disturbing (in other words, ideal scenario fodder). This limitation reduces the cost of these advantages (and any others that the GM decides might depend on inconvenient or unseemly rituals or elixirs) by 40%.

Example: Up-and-coming Cabalist Pham Cu Thuy, having murdered his mentor and stolen the Scroll of Azlerac, now knows a ritual that will make him Unaging (15 points) assuming he devours the flesh of a royal infant every January 6th. Between the inconvenience, the mess, the milky aftertaste, and the pointed questions asked during job interviews in royal nurseries, the ghoulish magus sometimes feels his gift to be rather flawed (–40%, or –6; the advantage is worth 9 points with the limitation), so, like the rest of the Cabal, Magister Pham continues to seek true immortality.

7.3.1.1 Ally p. B23

A Cabalist's ultor counts as an Ally (or, less often, a Patron); each Cabalist theoretically has two of these, and two passers. The GM should not charge points spent for a Cabalist's ultors and passers against the campaign maximum, or should grant all Cabal PCs the same number of points from which to buy ultors and passers. Some player groups may wish to create the player characters as each others' ultors and passers, which may leave them without potential backup

but will save points.

7.3.1.2 Ally Group p. CI19

In a basic, low-to-medium-powered game, a Lodge of Outer Circle Cabalists counts as a medium-sized Ally Group with some formidable individuals, appearing either quite often (60 points) or fairly often (30 points) depending on the campaign structure and the story arc.

7.3.1.3 Awareness p. CI33

Members of the Cabal and other practicing supernaturals more often refer to this advantage as "the Sight" or "second sight," although it is more powerful and versatile than the *GURPS* advantage Second Sight (p. CI43), which primarily allows the character to sense nearby, recent magics or magic items by touch. Characters with Awareness can sense the power and location of a nearby magical item, the nature (and possibly the mental state) of a supernatural being or spirit, sense magic at a distance (using the modifiers on p. B151), and so forth. Awareness can also detect powerful leys, Gates of Thoth, or other "soft places" in the material world from which another Realm or plane is particularly accessible. Neither Awareness nor Second Sight should be confused with World Sight (p. CI48), which grants shamanic potential.

7.3.1.4 Claim to Hospitality p. CI21

Members of the Cabal theoretically have a 10-point Claim to Hospitality with any other member of the Cabal (a large, influential group with members almost everywhere). In practice, the GM may wish to allow Cabalist PCs to take this advantage as part of a "Cabal package" or not charge it against the point total for the game.

7.3.1.5 Illuminated p. CI38

A Grand Master is *at least* Illuminated; the entire Cabal, of course, seeks Illumination in its way. Again, the GM must decide how often this advantage will apply in his campaign.

7.3.1.6 Magery, Limited pp. CI39–40

The various Limited Magery advantages are all potentially available to a *GURPS Cabal* campaign; although the theoretical theory of Hermetic magic is constant, the interplay of decanic energies with any given human personality, genetics, or aura can produce anomalous results of many kinds.

Single-Decan-Aspected Magery is similar to One College Only (p. CI39), in terms of spell and magic item limitations. In addition, characters possessing this limitation can only enter the higher Realms along a single decan. Everywhere you go in Yetzirah or Briah must be fully aspected to that decan and no other. You may only enter specified districts of multi-decanal places such as Atlantis or Nod; a dreamer's dreamworld may be off-limits to you unless they are dreaming of something definitely attached to your decan. This added restriction lowers Single-Decan-Aspected Magery to 8 points for 1st level, and 5 points per level for 2nd and 3rd level Magery.

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7.3.1.7 Mathematical Ability p. B22

Kabbalistic magic, astrology, and similar disciplines count as mathematical skills for the purpose of this advantage. At the GM's discretion, Hermetic magi with this advantage may cast their spells in half the required time *or* at a +2 bonus to success. GMs using the Intuitive Mathematician advantage (p. CI26) may allow Hermetic magi both bonuses.

7.3.1.8 Patron p. B24

The Cabal will be a 40–point Patron in most games, a giant organization with incalculable wealth and supernatural power and reach. Although its presence is likely to be felt in most *GURPS Cabal* games, the Cabal as a whole (disregarding one's ultors) has a fairly neglectful attitude toward its members — it might only appear, in a useful sense, fairly often (9 or less) or even rarely (6 or less).

An individual Grand Master will be an extremely powerful individual with supernatural power and reach (even among Cabalists, the powers of a Grand Master are extraordinary); making him worth 20 points. A "hands–on" patron like John Dee might be worth 40, a remote or erratic one like Khaibitu–na–Khonsu worth only 10. Any given Lodge is at least a 15–point Patron; anti–Cabal groups will range between 15 (Exodus 22) and 20 (the Pavane des Vampires; a 40–point Patron halved due to their insularity) points with only the most ruthless, global, and powerful (the GKUV) reaching 35 points.

7.3.1.9 Racial Memory p. CI42

Many Cabalists, both human and otherwise, have been alive for staggeringly long periods of time. Rather than spend hundreds or thousands of skill points building a centuries–old mage or vampire, this advantage can represent those generations of experience. Rather than biological generations, however, these are chronological ones.

7.3.1.10 Rank (Cabalistic) 5 points/level

This advantage carries only the benefits of initiation, respect, and power within the Cabal. Characters should buy any supernatural abilities, contacts, Ally Groups, or other benefits of their Cabalistic degree separately.

Rank 8: Grand Master

Rank 7: Master

Rank 6: Philosopher

Rank 5: Practitioner

Rank 4: Theorist

Rank 3: Adept

Rank 2: Novice

Rank 1: Initiate

Other Cabal–descended or Cabal front groups have their own degree systems, which may or may not correspond with Cabal ranks. The GM must decide what, for example, initiation as a 33rd–degree Freemason is worth in his campaign, aside from a few Contacts and a possible Claim to Hospitality.

7.3.1.11 Reawakened p. CI43

This advantage allows long–lived characters to spend experience points gaining skills from a murky or ill–recalled past. It can apply not only to reincarnated characters, but those who have been dead (or imprisoned in a pyramid, or rendered into powder, or similarly "out of touch") for some time.

7.3.1.12 Reputation p. B17

Magic and conspiracy, like politics, are conducted at retail. Your reputation is, in large part, your currency with people (and spirits, and monsters, and demons) who may need a little persuasion to do the right thing for (or against) the Cabal. Within the Cabal, being a Black School graduate is usually worth a +2 Reputation for intellect. Individual Cabalists will react to a given patron or faction individually — being in Garravin's faction may grant a wizard a +2 reputation with nonhumans, and a –4 reputation with John Dee's faction. Some old families in the Cabal have reputations for inbreeding, cruelty, greed, or political hardball. GMs should encourage Cabal characters to take Reputations if they're anything but raw recruits.

7.3.1.13 Spirit Empathy p. CI46

This advantage is very useful for dealing with spirits of all kinds, giving you a +3 reaction check when dealing with spirits. GMs should note that, like Faerie Empathy (p. CI36), characters who allow others to needlessly injure, enslave (including binding spells, etc.), or otherwise attempt to harm or compel spirits risk losing this reaction bonus. For the purposes of this advantage, demons, qliphoth, and elementals do not count as spirits (for magical reasons), nor do the staunchly chauvinist, unsentimental, and widely–hated yithoghu (for cultural reasons).

7.3.1.14 Visualization p. CI47

Ritual magicians, such as Cabalists, center their entire beings on bringing reality into accord with their will; this advantage is a common one among them.

7.3.2 New Advantages

7.3.2.1 Body of Swarm 60 points

You are a being composed of a swarm of gnat– to rat–sized bodies, with attacks and defenses as per p. B143. Your smaller bodies can communicate instantly with each other, and work in a coordinated fashion; the Mindshare distance table (p. CI61) applies.

Special Enhancement: Humanoid Form: You can assemble your component bodies into a manlike form, although you

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may not necessarily pass a close inspection. +50%.

Special Enhancement: Insect Form: Your component bodies are so small that they can eventually penetrate all but special protection. Otherwise you penetrate your opponent's clothes in 2 turns or armor in 5 turns (p. B143). You can also pass through insect-sized cracks, keyholes, ventilation grids, etc. +25%.

7.3.2.2 Dream Travel 3 points per level

Dream Travel is a single-skill psionic power that allows access to the dreamworld (p. 00). When you are asleep, your dream self can enter the dreamworld and operate there. This ability is similar to astral projection, in that your consciousness leaves your physical body behind.

There are, however, several important differences. First, the Dream Travel skill only works when you are sleeping normally (although at the GM's discretion, certain drugs or sleep rhythms may enhance Dream Travel). Second, your dream self only travels to the dreamworld, although it can access Nod (p. 00). It cannot travel in the physical world (for that, take the Astral Projection power). Finally, your dream self is unaware of what is happening to your physical body while you are "out."

Your dream self has your normal abilities in the dream world, along with PD equal to half your Power and DR equal to your Power/4.

7.3.2.3 Extended Magery Varies by level

Mages may purchase levels of Magery beyond 3. Magery 4 costs 50 points, Magery 5 costs 65, Magery 6 costs 85, Magery 7 costs 105, and additional levels cost another 25 points each; this follows attribute-cost progression. Magery 4+ is added to spells, Thaumatology skill, and the IQ roll to sense magic, just like Magery 1–3. Each level of Magery beyond Magery 3 *also* lets the mage exceed the usual limits of a spell by one level of effect if he spends additional energy.

For instance, Magery 7 (4 "extra" levels) lets one cast a PD 9 shield for 18 energy, a 7d Fireball for 7 energy (takes 7 seconds), and a Major Healing spell that heals 16 points for 8 energy.

In the default *GURPS Cabal* campaign, this advantage is only available to Aethyrs, Archangels, extraordinarily-powerful eikones (such as Minos, King of Atlantis, the god Thoth, or the daimon of Merlin), and (at the GM's discretion) to Grand Masters of the Cabal. An Aethyr will possess this advantage solely within its college or sphere of activity and power.

7.3.2.4 Pestilence 5 points/disease

The ability to spread plagues of the body, as well as feast on the plagues of the soul, is one of the most repugnant traits of the qliphoth. Other spirits also possess this power, especially darker para-elementals, numina of grave pits, and the eikones of famous epidemics such as the Plague of Pericles, the Tenth Plague of Egypt, or the Spanish Flu. Each disease the spirit carries is a separate advantage; see pp. CII167–174 for ideas. Bubonic plague, leprosy and typhoid fever are all possibilities, but magical plague spirits might also carry the extinct diseases of the Lemurians, hallucinogenetic fevers, or

something equally awful.

After contact with a spirit with Pestilence, the GM should secretly roll vs. the HT of each character. Modifiers: -3 if wounded by the spirit, +1 if merely touched, +2 otherwise. On a failed HT roll, the victim is infected with the disease, which progresses normally. If there was no direct contact with the spirit, use the *Contagion* rules (p. B133) instead. Multiple diseases require multiple HT rolls. Spirits can use their power of Probability Alteration (p. 00) to improve the chances of a victim becoming infected by applying a penalty to the HT roll (at 2 Fatigue per -1 to the roll, maximum of -10). Immunity to Disease protects completely against this advantage.

7.3.2.5 Secret True Name 2/5/8/10 points

Your True Name (p. 00) is secret, unlike that of the average person in the modern industrial world. Although his "legal name" may be obscure, a day or so of checking with the Bureau of Vital Statistics (perhaps a week's research for someone who moves around a lot) can almost always turn it up; such people have a Semi-Public True Name, worth 0 points. Someone better known by a pseudonym ("Aleister Crowley" for Edward Alexander Crowley) or nickname (someone with a middle name of Edward who uses "Ted" as a first name) has a two-point version of this advantage. His True Name can still be discovered relatively easily, but many investigators will assume his public name is accurate, or use it as a (flawed) basis for initial research.

This advantage costs 5 points for a True Name known to a small group such as your family, parish priests (for baptismal names or confirmation names, which often differ from the name on the birth certificate), or village elders. Investigators can discover it, but only with time and effort.

For 8 points, your True Name is known only to one other person: your wife, your mother, your magical mentor. This is also the value for a True Name known by a group inaccessible from your current environment. A wizard from a parallel Earth, or a tribal warrior from a remote island, or a spirit from another plane of existence may have a True Name known to everybody "at home," but people in the standard game setting must go to outrageous lengths to discover it.

For 10 points, your True Name is known only to yourself. In some societies, this may require an Unusual Background.

This advantage can only be taken in a game where magic obeys the Law of Names (p. 00). Characters with an Alternate Identity (p. CI20) or Secret Identity (p. CI79) have an extra layer of defense against name magic, but these advantages are stackable with Secret True Name.

7.3.2.6 Spirit Advisor Variable

You have a spirit "friend" that shares its wisdom with you. This can be a ghost, a manifestation of a previous incarnation, an ancestral Lar (p. 00), or nearly any other type of numen (p. 00) or lesser eikone (p. 00). The spirit advisor is roleplayed by the GM and should be built like any other NPC. Unlike an Ally, the spirit advisor is not expected to fight on your behalf, it simply provides information and advice. Most spirit advisors have the equivalent of Occultism-16 and may have two or three Scientific or Professional skills at a high level. The GM can use the spirit advisor to give warnings, clues, and other valuable information. Generally, the advice of the spirit is good, although it may be colored by the entity's prejudices.

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The base cost of this advantage is 10 points. Use the Frequency of Appearance Modifiers on p. B23 to determine the actual cost.

7.3.3 Spirit–Jumper 80 points

You have the paranormal ability to physically enter into Yetzirah (p. 00). Your body and clothing are translated into ectoplasm, allowing you to exist there and interact with other spirits normally. While in Yetzirah you have your normal abilities, subject to its environment and paraphysical laws. You're effectively a spirit there and affected by things that normally affect spirits. From Yetzirah you can cross into Briah as a normal spirit does, across the Pearl–Bright Ocean.

Making the transition from one Realm to another requires a second of concentration and 1 point of fatigue, followed by a Will roll. If successful, you shift from one world to the other. A failed roll means you cannot make the transition for at least an hour. A critical failure may trap you "between" worlds unable to effect either one, causing you to appear as an insubstantial image in both worlds. Or it might draw the attention of certain malign spirits, or send you somewhere else altogether at the GM's discretion.

Special Enhancement: No concentration. When you want to move between Realms you only need to spend fatigue and make a Will roll. +15%.

Special Enhancement: No fatigue cost. You don't have to spend any fatigue to move between Realms. +20%.

Special Enhancement: Additional weight. As a default you can carry up to No encumbrance, but based on your Will, not ST! Thus if you have a Will of 12, "no encumbrance" is up to 24 lbs., regardless of your ST. +10% If you can carry up to light encumbrance, +20% for medium encumbrance, +30% for heavy encumbrance, +50% for extra–heavy encumbrance. –10% if you can carry nothing (meaning you leave even your clothes behind). At the +30% level you can bring one other person with you regardless of weight. At the +50% level, you can bring any number of other people with you, so long as they are in relatively close proximity with you. By spending 5 fatigue, you can increase your normal encumbrance level by one step for a single passage between worlds.

Special Limitation: Spirit walker. You must be able to move (at least a step or two) in order to shift between worlds. You have to divest yourself of any weight over your encumbrance before making the attempt and free yourself of anything that restricts your movement (like manacles) or the attempt fails. –10%

Special Limitation: Special portal. You need a particular sort of "gateway" to shift between worlds, such as a reflective surface, a natural cave opening, or a sacred stone circle on a moonlit night. The value of the limitation depends on how rare the required gateway is; a reflective surface is –20%, as is a relatively common geographic feature. Only in a certain sacred spot at a certain time of the year is a –75% limitation.

Special Limitation: Translation Robe. Some traditions or techniques of spirit travel require the replacement of mundane garb with special, spiritually–attuned or purified garments. The value of this limitation depends on the specificity, and rarity, of the vestment in question. If any white linen garment can serve as a "translation robe," that would be a –20% limitation; a specific pattern woven of Angoran bighorn fleece by the looms of Thessalian crones would be a –50% limitation. If you can wear normal clothing under (or over) the translation robe, the limitation's value is halved.

Special Limitation: Single–Decan Traveler. This limitation works the same way here as it does under Single–Decan–Aspected Magery (p. 00). Many supernaturals begin with this limitation; spirit–jumping vampires, for instance, are single–decan aspected to Kurta 1. (At the GM's discretion, some spirits or other entities may have this as a –20% Limitation on the Spirit Form advantage.) –50%

Special Limitation: Stunning. You're always mentally stunned after a shift. –10%

7.3.3.1 Terror 30 points

+10 points/–1 to Fright Check

Others are struck by irrational, supernatural fear in your presence. This can take various forms: a psychic attack, an aura of dread, a face that looks like a dead loved one to everyone who views it, and so forth. Anyone who sees you must make a Fright Check immediately; a new roll is required if you reappear after an absence of at least one hour.

Modifiers: The modifiers on p. B93; +1 per appearance after the first within 24 hours. Penalties can be purchased for 10 points per –1. Multiple beings with Terror cause *one* Fright Check at the highest penalty among them, with an additional –1 for 5 creatures, –2 for 10, –3 for 20, –4 for 50, and –5 for 100 or more.

Special Limitation: Chilling Touch. You cause fear as outlined above, but only in those you touch. Spirits can take this ability, and need not materialize in order to use it. Neither PD nor DR protect against this touch. –20%.

Special Limitation: Terror can normally be turned off to let you engage in social activities. If you can't turn it off, you have Horrific Appearance (p. CI80) *instead* of Terror, and suffer a –6 reaction penalty at all times. This is a disadvantage worth –30 points.

7.4 Disadvantages

7.4.0.1 Addiction p. B30

Magicians have access to a lot of drugs and chemicals, and work in high–stress jobs with no clear future. This is a recipe for addiction. Most magical nootropics are incapacitating, highly addictive, and expensive. Since the government doesn't know they exist for the most part, they're legal, though. This makes the average nootropic habit a –35 point addiction. Other materia magica, from paut to tana leaves, are less incapacitating, and of varying addictivity, but still expensive; they are –15 to –25 point addictions. Some magi are addicted to magic itself; such an addiction is commonly relatively cheap and legal, but highly addictive; a –10 point addiction.

7.4.0.2 Astral Entity p. CI96

This disadvantage is subsumed within the Can't Materialize limitation for spirits (p. 00); it should not be available to spirit PCs unless they are also barred from entering Briah and Atziluth.

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7.4.0.3 Code of Honor p. B31

Cabalistic Code of Honor: Do not betray the existence of the supernatural; expand the knowledge and power of the Cabal; avenge your passer. –5 points.

Pavane of Vampires Code of Honor: Keep vampirism hidden from outsiders, a fellow vampire's sanctum is inviolate, do not sire a new vampire without permission, obey and respect the elders in all things, you are responsible for your get, follow court etiquette or be shamed, take no steps outside the Pavane. –15 points.

Secret Society Code of Honor (Traditional): Do not betray the society, or reveal its secrets to outsiders; aid fellow members of the society where possible. –5 points.

Oathbound: Many magicians (and even more spirits, demons, ultraterrestrials, etc.) also follow a strict policy of keeping to the letter of their sworn word; this is a "stackable" Code of Honor worth an additional –5 points.

7.4.0.4 Duty p. B39

A Cabalist has a Duty to the Cabal; the GM will have to determine the frequency of this advantage depending on his campaign. Some Cabalists, such as those on the front lines against the djinn, have an Extremely Hazardous Duty (p. CI78).

7.4.0.5 Enemies p. B39

The Cabal is a –40 point utterly formidable Enemy; the GKUV, the Sirri, or the djinn are –30 point Enemies. Lesser groups and individual Lodges range between –20 and –30 points depending on their level of available firepower. A single Grand Master (and his network) is a –20 point Enemy. Frequency of appearance will vary by geography (the djinn appear quite often in the Middle East, quite rarely in Brazil) or by the type of campaign. In a Cabal-smashing *GURPS Cliffhangers* game, the Cabal would appear almost all the time and be worth –120 points! In those games, it's probably best to only make an Enemy of one segment of the Cabal at a time.

7.4.0.6 Frightens Animals p. CI97

Almost all supernatural entities (especially "monstrous" ones such as werewolves and vampires) possess this disadvantage. Magic users steeped in unearthly decanic energies, or psis whose link with reality has become somewhat detached, also tend to develop this effect.

7.4.0.7 Innumerate p. CI91

Innumerate characters cannot practice kabbalism (sidebar, p. 00) or any type of alchemy or other enchantment depending on precise decanic values, or gain any benefits from visiting the sephiroth (sidebar, p. 00). Casting Hermetic magic takes 10 times as long for innumerate magicians, and takes a –5 modifier to success.

7.4.0.8 Mundane Background p. CI98

This is a truly serious, and potentially life-threatening, disadvantage for either a would-be Cabalist or a would-be opponent of the Cabal.

7.4.0.9 Non-Iconographic p. CI92

Non-iconographic characters cannot practice Hermetic magic at all. Kabbalism, however, is possible for non-iconographic characters, as it rests almost entirely within words and numbers; psionics and Rune Magic may be allowed at the GM's discretion. Non-iconographic characters cannot use the Great Art of Memory (p. 00).

7.4.0.10 Weirdness Magnet p. CI100

A Cabalist (or Cabal-hunter) with this disadvantage not only has his mundane existence disturbed on a regular basis by bizarre conspiracies and astral entities — when you're dealing with the Cabal, that's just business as usual — but encounters things that even his peers find bizarre, humorous, or unsettling. (Or all three.) Perhaps Sam the Froot Loops toucan appears declaring his undying love, or vampires spontaneously break into Elvis impersonations when dealing with the character, or his trips to the Astral Plane all seem to pass through Hartsfield Airport in Atlanta.

7.4.1 New Disadvantage**7.4.1.1 Anachronism –5 points/TL**

Many long-lived beings, especially those who spend much time outside the Material Realm, fail to keep up with current developments in society, technology, and culture. Whether due to stubbornness, future shock, or senescence, you are simply unable to learn any skills above your "native" TL (or above the TL at which your intellectual adaptability ceased). You are also unable to keep modern fashions, trends, cultural references, etc. straight, which may cause reaction penalties in conversation or more serious gaffes at the GM's discretion. This disadvantage is worth 5 points for each TL difference between the campaign TL and your own. You must make an IQ roll to use any higher-tech device that doesn't normally require a skill roll (telephones, word processors, air conditioners). In social situations, you must make an IQ roll or revert to the customs and manners of your bygone age, thus making your actions seem bizarre and memorable. This disadvantage is also a common one in fae, and in resurrected beings such as the undead or Grand Masters in magical suspended animation.

7.4.1.2 Public True Name –10 points

For some reason — paternal carelessness, enemy action, tabloid journalism — your True Name is widely known to anyone who knows anything about you. In the modern industrialized world, this may be as simple as habitually using your full legal name in everyday life. ("That's Trevor James Wallbank IV, attorney at law. Ask for me by name.") This disadvantage can only be taken in games in which the magical Law of Names (p. 00) functions.

7.5 Skills

7.5.0.1 Area Knowledge pp. B62–63

Many Cabalists possess Area Knowledge of Yetzirah; some possess Area Knowledge of Briah. The GM may want to adjust the die rolls based on how far off the beaten path a sorcerer has floated; as a practical matter, both Realms are infinite, so even the vastest Area Knowledge will give out eventually.

7.5.0.2 Astrology p. B60, p. AN56

This is not low-tech Astronomy. Aside from the names of the various stars and planets, and the mechanics of shooting declination and ascension, astrology has little or nothing to do with astronomy, and has advanced considerably in technique (if not necessarily in theory) since the medieval era. Astrology defaults from Astronomy, of any tech level, at -5.

7.5.0.3 Law p. 58

Magical beings are especially governable by rule and ritual. The eikones of Briah, under the watchful gaze of the Archangels, have developed a stern and just, if not always clear, code of laws. Eikonic law and fae law grant a +3 bonus to each other. Due to cultural contact and fae malleability, medieval French law grants a +2 bonus to fae law. Old Norse law and werewolf law grant a +2 bonus to each other, for similar reasons.

7.5.0.4 Photography (Spirit)

This specialization covers the photographing of spiritual entities, paranormal energies, and other supernatural phenomena. Depending on the campaign, Spirit Photography can encompass alchemically-mixed fixers and developers, lenses ground to kabbalistic proportions, the use of Kirlian apparatus, and so forth. (The GM may require knowledge of Alchemy, Occultism, or Psionics for characters to use this specialization.) Erasmus Rooke has pioneered the use of spirit photography in the study of the Realms and their interactions. Examining a successful spirit photograph of an entity can give the viewer the same information that the Awareness advantage or the Aura spell (p. B163) grants, although the GM may require the examiner to succeed at an Occultism or similar skill to successfully interpret the data.

7.5.0.5 Savoir-Faire p. B64

A very useful skill for dealing with powerful spirits of unknown antecedents and intentions. Even the tiniest numina wishes to be treated respectfully, and it's very unwise to bully, or behave rudely to, any entity you can't kill.

7.5.0.6 Thaumatology p. C1149

In a *GURPS Cabal* campaign, this skill, dealing with the "physics" of mana and magic, refers specifically to Hermetic theory and its supporting scholarship. It should not be available to non-Cabal characters without a convincing, and hefty, Unusual Background.

7.5.1 New Skills

7.5.1.1 Great Art of Memory (Mental/Very Hard) Defaults to Bardic Lore–4 or Skaldic Lore–4

This skill, taught in the ancient rhetorical schools of Augustan Rome, allows the user to memorize, word for word, extremely long stretches of text, conversation, poetry, or anything else. The Druidic bardic colleges, and the teachers of skaldic doctrine, likely used similar, though less formalized or flexible, techniques. Users of the Great Art of Memory construct mental "memory palaces" (p. 00) in which their memories take on symbolic aspects. This iconography then allows the memorizer to incorporate sense memories, personal experiences, and so forth into his memory palace.

A successful skill roll enables a character to mentally enter his memory palace (requiring a Concentrate maneuver) and retrieve a memory. With a success, a character may add +3 to any skill *in which the character has already spent points* that largely depends on textual or memorized information. Such skills include Area Knowledge, Augury, Chess, Diagnosis, Heraldry, Intelligence Analysis, Literature, Languages, scientific skills, Thaumatology, and all Hermetic or ritual magical spells. At the GM's discretion, a character succeeding in a Great Art of Memory skill roll may add +1 to any skill with an IQ default thanks to reading and general study; a perfect memory of the *Boy Scout Handbook* or the *U.S. Army Survival Manual* will help Survival, for instance. Each skill to be mnemonically augmented requires a separate Great Art of Memory roll, and the bonus can only be taken immediately after the success occurred.

A successful use of the Great Art of Memory will also allow the character to perform feats of memorization, such as remembering an entire auction word for word with all bids, or counting cards at a blackjack table, or detect magically– or psionically–altered memories in his own mind.

8 Chapter Seven: Wonders and Magics

Over the four millennia of its existence, the Cabal has happened upon many — in the words of Howard Carter opening King Tut's tomb — "wonderful things." Some are as physical as a badly-mummified severed hand, others as ineffable as the actual vocabulary of Creation.

8.1 Magic Items

The GM should assign the Power of any of these items to suit his story: some tana leaves might be old, dried up, and cut with oregano — another packet might be freshly harvested from the Canopic branch of the Nile and flown into O'Hare this morning. (That said, 25 should be 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.

8.1.1 Constructs

8.1.1.1 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 servants, spies, assassins, or entertainments. Creating a magical clockwork first requires the necessary Engineer (Clockwork) skill. Powering the clockwork can involve either Animate Object (p. G67) or Animate Machine (p. G98), building in a Mana Engine (p. VE86) or a Lemurian crystal (p. 00) granting the Power spell (p. M43), or constructing 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 of the clockwork's gears and springs, and a successful Alchemy roll to determine their required composition. Magical clockwork built of common materials (brass, silver, etc.) has weight 0.025 lbs. per kW, occupies 1 cf per 50 lbs., and costs \$55 per lb. Constructing a magical clockwork from orichalcum (p. 00) *quintuples* the energy output and raises the cost to \$5500 per lb.

8.1.1.2 Golems

Many Cabalists find uses for golems (p. M116), homunculi (p. G42), and other magically-constructed humanoids such as the gargoiles vrais (p. 00) 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

8 Chapter Seven: Wonders and Magics

Laboratories (p. 00) 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*.

8.1.1.3 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 semiprecious stones and 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 (p. B151) the spell while studying the orrery.

8.1.2 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.

8.1.2.1 Azoth

This alchemical substance, also known as the Green Lion, or the Philosopher's Mercury, amplifies and activates the quintessence of any matter. In conjunction with azoth, the inherent gold within a base metal can be drawn into focus on the material plane, or the inherent elemental air within wood sap (which flows up from a tree's roots) can be harnessed to lift a wooden ship. Using azoth requires, first, a supply of the material, distilled from mercury at about a 1:50 ratio. Distilling azoth requires the formula (jealously guarded by the various alchemical families) and the Alchemy skill, as well as laboratory facilities and a lot of mercury. (Make sure those labs are well-ventilated; mercury poisoning causes serious brain damage.) Treat the distilling of azoth as a Complex invention (or an Amazing one, if the alchemist must first derive the formula), if you use the Invention rules on p. CI125-126.

Correctly using azoth to awaken the properties of matter requires a success with Alchemy; using that azothic matter in a device may demand an Engineering, Craft, or other similar skill. As a rule of thumb, one ounce of azoth can awaken sufficient quintessential matter to equal 100 points of the corresponding enchantment. The GM should decide which alchemical rationalizations make sense and have the proper flavor — a woolen invisibility cloak is harder to justify than a fiberglass one. As with any enchanted item, the effect of azoth-treated matter is as permanent as the material treated. No magical skill is ever necessary to use an azoth-activated device. For items that are not "always on" (such as a steel rifle barrel with the inherent elemental fire of its inner surface awakened to become a fireball-gun), the crafter must build some mechanical triggering device (in this case, a flintlock action would work, since it strikes a spark).

Price: \$50,000 an ounce, on average.

8.1.2.2 Dragon's Blood

Just what it says, the actual blood of a dragon. This is, to put it mildly, a non-renewable resource. Although dragons remain in some parts of the Inner Realms, only the blood of a thoroughly material dragon has the effects so craved by destructive magicians. Since the last known dragon on Earth died under the spear of Sir Georg von Frankenstein in 1531, supplies are limited. The full effects of dragon's blood aren't fully understood; it's dangerous and incredibly expensive stuff to experiment with. Adding an additional wrinkle, like wine, it varies with the vintage and the region. Among the potential effects of dragon's blood, however, are the following:

Poison: Dragon's blood is an incredibly powerful Type C venom, doing 4d+4 damage if introduced into the bloodstream. It literally sets the victim's blood on fire.

Language Gift: If properly cooked, dragon's blood grants skill at IQ with all languages, human and inhuman. If improperly cooked, it's still a deadly poison, and will take effect after it has been digested and entered the bloodstream, which is to say about a half hour after eating.

Fire Magic: Dragon's blood, in a pinch, can be used to create fires; treat it as a thick, fluid, powerstone with 10 energy points per ounce for fire magic only. (Dragon's blood obviously cannot power "anti-fire" spells in the Elemental Fire college such as Cold or Extinguish Fire.) Once used, it crumbles to an ashy, oily residue.

Wild Magic: Dragon's blood, atomized and sprayed into a room, causes any magic cast there to *critically fail* as long as the bloody cloud hangs in midair, normally about five seconds. If it lands without "detonating" a magical spell, treat it as nitric acid.

Dragon's blood should not be confused with *dragonsblood*, the aromatic crimson resin from the palm fruit *Daemonorops*.

Price: \$7500 an ounce, up to two hundred times that for a guaranteed 987 Geatland.

8.1.2.3 Orichalcum

This "mountain copper" was the reddish-gold magical metal of lost Atlantis. Orichalcum ore naturally occurs in flint-bearing copper mines, such as those in the Pyrenees mountains, but differentiating it from normal copper requires skill at both Alchemy and Geology. Smelting orichalcum is a fairly simple task not much different from smelting tin; it requires only a day or so of alchemical attention, and unlike much alchemical practice (p. 00) does not depend on the position of the stars for success.

Refined orichalcum can be worked like bronze; smiths not used to orichalcum's weight and gloss work at a -2 modifier to skill. In armor or weapons, orichalcum gives the durability and protection of iron; in machinery it has the tensile strength of steel. Most importantly for magicians, anything made from it requires only one-fifth of the normal energy cost to enchant with a spell. The Invisible College has developed the theoretical recipe for a titanium-platinum-orichalcum alloy that would be lighter, stronger, and more ductile than conventional orichalcum and still convey orichalcum's magical benefits.

Price: \$5500 per lb.

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8.1.2.4 Paut

This inky fluid, made from silver, pure water, Western emmer, ibis blood, and other less savory ingredients, is a sort of liquid powerstone (see p. B161). The ancient Egyptian magicians developed it, and Erasmus Rooke aided in reddeciphering the formula in 1872, although it has almost certainly been rediscovered and lost repeatedly by individual mages in the centuries between. Since paut is liquid, a mage can measure out the amount needed for any spell, without worrying about the distinction between small and large powerstones. The ritual for making paut (it cannot be recharged) is a secret restricted to Practitioner grade and above.

Drinking paut restores energy lost through spellcasting (1 point per ounce), but not fatigue lost from other activities. Paut can be mixed into any alchemical elixir (at one ounce per dose) involving life, growth, or connections to the Astral Realm; if so used, it halves the cooking time for such elixirs. Paut is also commonly used to make homunculi or other living and pseudoliving creations; particularly strong paut, or paut made from premium ingredients, has a tendency to jiggle and move even inside a flask. A common apprentice prank in the Cairo Black School involves surreptitiously mixing paut into another student's soup or wine and watching him startle when tiny mayfly men climb out of the cup and die. Every ounce of paut holds one mana point.

Price: The going rate for good-quality paut is \$700 an ounce.

8.1.2.5 Tana Leaves

The priesthood of Thoth used tana leaves in embalming and mummification practices. They come from a rare herb that can only be grown in swampy ground (such as the Nile or Mississippi deltas) under magical conditions. Cabalists of the Inner Circle rely on tana leaves for longevity, usually by brewing them in tea. (Drinking a bag's worth of good-quality tana tea grants Halt Aging (p. M51) at Power 45.) So far, a true immortality potion has yet to be derived from tana leaves. The Inner Circle tries to keep tana leaves a restricted secret, with the predictable result that a thriving trade in them has sprung up as an underground within the underground.

Value: \$5,000 and up per bag.

8.1.3 Nootropics

From the Greek words meaning "mind turning," *nootropics* are more commonly referred to as "consciousness-altering substances." Nootropics of many kinds have long been part of ritual practice, as a way to detach the user from the mundane — either metaphorically, or practically.

8.1.3.1 Amanita Veritas

The *amanita muscaria*, or fly agaric mushroom, has long been a staple of visionary religious experience from the Siberian shamans to St. John the Divine on the Greek island of Patmos. The Cabal developed a subvariety of that mushroom, the *amanita veritas* ("true amanita"), during the 7th century B.C. as a weapon in a large-scale war against a qliphothic invasion of the Near East. When dried, powdered, and inhaled, amanita veritas grants 1d hours of the Spirit-Jumper advantage. It still grows along the slopes of the Zagros, Taurus, and Caucasus mountains, identifiable to those who recognize its unique double-lobed cap.

Value: \$250 per dose.

8.1.3.2 Dionysian Wine

According to Greek myth, the god Dionysos arrived in Thrace some time between 1400 and 800 B.C. bringing a superior wine that removed all care from mankind. After a brief orgy of forcible cannibalism and mass murder, Dionysos made his way into the pantheon, and his cult, the Bacchantes, became the custodians of his marvelous vintage. Now, his worshipers carry on the old tradition, laboring in the vineyards of France and California to preserve the miraculous grapes of their god.

The wine of Dionysos has many effects, depending on vintage and ritual. In the frenzied *omophagia* ritual, it adds the Bestial (–15; p. CI101) and Compulsive Carousing (–10, p.CI87) disadvantages, and grants any number of advantages including Toughness, Sharp Teeth, and so forth. In some traditions, it brings Dionysos to possess the drinker, much as a voodoo loa rides its worshipers. Those ridden by Dionysos may receive appropriate spells, skills, or abilities from him, if they petition him according to the old usages. In other rituals, it allows a person to forget any memory they choose, or to erase a violated oath. In still others, it acts as a holy suicide drug, sending the worshiper's soul to Briah and the court of the roaring god Dionysos to be pressed into new wine, all care removed.

Value: From \$500 per bottle to priceless, depending on vintage and effect.

8.1.3.3 Flying Ointment

This compound of hellebore, aconite, belladonna (p. CII138), henbane, and other psychoactive herbs and roots causes olfactory and visual hallucinations, dizziness, and other dramatic symptoms. Mixed into animal or vegetable fat and smeared on the body, it became known as the "flying ointment" because users would most commonly hallucinate flying experiences such as the traditional witches' sabbath.

This is essentially hallucinogenic "backblast" from the true compound, a mixture known only to a few lineages of secretly pagan Cabalists in central Europe. When rubbed on a nude sleeping person, the ointment grants Lucid Dreaming (p. CI142) at the user's HT; they can then enter their dreamworld (p. 00) and, eventually, the Inner Realms themselves. When rubbed on a nude waking person, the flying ointment turns the user ethereal (as in the spell Ethereal Body, p. M72) and draws him at 10–60 mph (depending on wind speed) toward the nearest major magical manifestation. The flyer can maneuver (with a successful Flight (Unwinged) skill roll), perhaps to get a better view of something on the way, but not turn aside from his destination. In the Middle Ages, this was often a magical battlefield in the War of the Elm, but demonic gateways, major magical rituals, and even important Cabal meetings might qualify, at the GM's discretion. Once at the destination, the flyer may make a Will roll to materialize at any time; if he remains ethereal, he will rematerialize at sunrise. If rubbed in the eyes, flying ointment grants the Awareness advantage (p. 00), although it blinds the user for 1d minutes first; this advantage also disappears at cockcrow.

Price: Around \$150 per dose, depending on the season.

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8.1.3.4 Kola Nut

This bitter, highly caffeinated red-and-white nut grows wild all across the West African coast, and is cultivated in the American tropics. Its most common varieties serve as a mild stimulant and dissociant, but the Sirri (p. 00) have spent 36 centuries in a kind of biotech alchemy creating strains of kola that produce any number of effects. Most of the various types of Sirri kola enhance human abilities; strength, speed, toughness, and creativity seem to be the most common. (The Sirri have a variety of kola matching any of the beneficial "wonder drugs" in *GURPS Ultra-Tech* or *GURPS Ultra-Tech 2*.) The Sirri Elders supposedly live solely on the "ka kola" which conveys complete perfection of mind and body.

Price: Varies, but runs approximately \$100 for each character point the corresponding advantage (or disadvantage, for tactically useful ones like Berserk) would cost (or grant) in character creation.

8.1.3.5 Soma

Nobody precisely knows what this plant, ritually consumed in religious ecstasy by the Indo-Aryan invaders of South Asia, really was. By the time Cabal agents reached India, in the first millennium B.C., the plant soma had become the god Soma. Soma seems to exist, like most nootropics, to break down the barriers between Realms; however, Soma seems to do it in fairly careless fashion. Areas of major soma cultivation depopulated overnight leaving only epic legends of warfare among the gods, flying chariots, and city-scouring explosions. Cabalists fear that Soma successfully spored some time around 1500 B.C. and the drifting spores have lodged in crannies throughout the known Realms. The cracks soma spores make in the world are prime entry points for qliphoth, or other Outside entities. Perhaps the coming of Soma was just the first shot fired in a long-distance war with a heretofore unguessed-at cosmos.

8.1.4 Tools

The Cabal has always been about tools, from the leverage that magic gives a human being to alter the universe to the use of dupes and cutouts in its games of conspiracy. This fabricistic mindset finds full glory in the arsenal of magical equipment used by the Cabal down through the centuries. Herewith, a smattering.

8.1.4.1 The Hand of Glory

One of the most gruesomely traditional magical devices is the Hand of Glory. Its heyday was the great age of public hangings, which ended around 1850; finding the hand of a hanged murderer takes a great deal more advance planning now. Once you've got the hand, squeeze out the blood, pickle it in niter, salt, pepper, and other noxious herbs, and render the tallow from it by drying it over a vervain fire. Combine the tallow with dung and sesame to make a candle. Jam the candle into the hand, between the fingers; when lit, it will open any doorway and send the sleep of death into any chamber. The power of this item will vary depending on the creator — a simple rogue may only be able to open one tavern door and sink four people into slumber; a great magus could open the gate to Fort Knox and put the garrison to sleep. Rumor persists of a Hand of Glory made from the left hand of Judas Iscariot — such a hand might be able to open the gate to Nod and grant the wielder power over all Dream.

Enchantments: Lockmaster and Mass Sleep, at least.

Value: \$6,000 and up.

8.1.4.2 Lemurian Crystals

The antediluvian and primordial Lemurians were able to separate, amplify, and manipulate the decan flows using crystals, most often carved into lenses, prisms, tuning forks, or bells. No human gemologist, magically aware or mundane, has been able to replicate the precise structure of these fragile, yet mighty artifacts. Activating or using any Lemurian device requires Telesend. Using Mind–Sending, Telepathy, or any similar magic can clumsily activate the crystal with strong harmonic "feedback" vibrations (energy costs are doubled both for casting and maintenance). As far as Cabalists understand the theory, the Lemurians could create almost any magical effect or combination of effect using properly tuned and focused crystals. The spectral signatures of the few Lemurian crystals the Cabal has been able to study approximately track the relevant colors of the decans.

Enchantments: Various.

Value: Starts at \$250,000.

8.1.4.3 Rapiers of Cellini

The Cabalist, alchemist, and goldsmith Benevenuto Cellini designed these swords in 1534; other Cabalists have copied his designs since, and Cellini rapiers are common accoutrements among the more dashing Cabalists. Put simply, these swords can harm immaterial creatures, doing normal damage for very fine rapiers. Some Cellini rapiers have inlaid silver patterns, for damaging silver–averse supernaturals. Many, by now, have other spells worked into the blades or into jewels set in the pommel. A Cellini rapier's astral shadow (p. 00) always accompanies its wielder's *ka* in the Inner Realms.

Enchantments: Unknown.

Value: \$5,000 to \$300,000 depending on weapon history and workmanship.

8.1.4.4 The Ring of Garravin

The fae Grand Master Garravin (p. 00) forged this brass ring shortly before the fae began to withdraw from the material plane. In appearance, it resembles a mass of intertwined and knotted snakes roiling around the wearer's finger. According to legend, the snakes can whisper ultraterrestrial knowledge into the wearer's ear. Garravin also bound the demon Alakbar into a pentagram on the inside of the ring. Alakbar has ST 16, DX 12, IQ 10, HT 15/26, the demonic powers listed in the template on p. 00, and the innate spell Madness–30. He appears as a large, shimmering, ghostly form, within which one can see hundreds of humanoid faces screaming in terror (–5 to Fright Checks). When Garravin retreated to Fa'rie, he gave the ring to his closest human follower; at least three Cabalists claim to wear the original Ring of Garravin at the present.

Enchantments: Summon Demon (Alakbar only), unknown.

Value: Unique and priceless.

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8.1.4.5 The Seal of Solomon

The mighty King Solomon developed the geometrical and alphabetic pattern that compelled the obedience of the djinn; the interlocking equilateral triangles (the "Star of David") with the six-letter Name of God within. So powerfully did he impress this emblem upon their alien consciousness that even now they dread the sight of it. See p. AN91 for further details.

Enchantments: If any, Pentagram, Ward, some include Control Elemental, Enslave, and Banish.

Value: From \$25 for a crumbling clay quickie to priceless for the brass and sapphire ring Solomon personally used.

8.1.4.6 Stasis Box

Invented by Erasmus Rooke in 1853, this item allows material things to be brought into the Inner Realms, and sufficiently solid immaterial things (particularly powerful astral shadows, elemental matter, long-solidified ectoplasm such as that in Fa'rie) to be brought into the Material Realm. In form, it is a brazilwood box of specific proportions (1:4:9) lined with a sandwich of virgin linen and platinum-anodized tin.

Any traveler using "out-of-body" techniques to enter the Inner Realms (see p. 00) may place an item in the Stasis Box, along with a drop of his own blood. He then holds the Stasis Box in his hands and enters the Realms. Although he is an immaterial *ka*, the object within the Box is materially present within the Realms with him, and he may carry or use it normally. If he loses or gives away the item, it does not return to the Box; if he trades or sacrifices it for another, its replacement will appear in the Box on Assiah upon his return. If the Box cannot contain the new object, it will hold a randomly-associated ectoplasmic sludge instead.

Enchantments: Plane Shift, Hide Object, likely others.

Value: \$15,000.

8.1.4.7 Talisman of Vision

This is a necklace bearing a gold talisman in the shape of an inverted ankh, primarily worn by Adepts who are Lodge Masters. It allows the Adept to detect the presence of magical items and supernatural entities in the immediate area. It is usually worn during initiation rites and other lodge ceremonies, although Adepts may wear it "in the field" if necessary.

Enchantments: Mage Sight, Sense Spirit.

Value: \$30,000.

8.1.4.8 Tarot of the Cabal

Most magical societies have their own tarot deck, and the Cabal is no exception. The cards of the Cabal tarot are lavish and detailed, bearing hieroglyphs, Kabbalistic symbols, and images of Egyptian deities. A small, private firm in Luxembourg prints the deck for distribution among Middle and Inner Circle Cabalists. The deck is not enchanted, but

can be used for Cartomancy (p. M48), though at -5 for non-Cabalists, and -3 for Cabalists of the Outer Circle. Many individual Cabalists enchant their decks, of course, or individual cards within them. Minor Arcana cards in this deck grant $+3$ to Enchant spells cast on them; Major Arcana cards grant $+5$ to Enchant spells cast on them.

Value: \$250 for a standard Middle Circle deck.

8.1.4.9 Uraeus of the Ennead

A uraeus is a headdress similar to those worn by Egyptian pharaohs, a circlet in the shape of a winged cobra. The Cabal uraei are made of silk and held together by a narrow band of gold. A sun-shaped gemstone is mounted on the front of the band (putting it at the center of the forehead when worn). Within the gemstone appears a god's name, carved in hieroglyphics. There are seven known types of uraeus, with seven different gemstones, corresponding with seven separate Egyptian deities. Completists believe there are two lost uraei, the rarest of all, corresponding with the final two gods of the neo-Heliopolitan Ennead, Atum and Set. Each uraeus may also give bonuses for invoking or abjuring its associated god. If an unscrupulous thief removes the gem, the basic enchantments remain within the uraeus, but any connection with the god is severed — the headband itself becomes useless.

The Uraeus of Geb: This uraeus may, in addition to its spell effects, grant power over the leys (possibly by enchantment with the ley spells from pp. PM26–27). It is traditionally worn at the founding of a new Lodge; Cabalists consider a Lodge founded "out of Geb's sight" unlucky. This is the second most common of the uraei.

Gem: Onyx.

Enchantments: Measurement, Shape Stone, Levitation (only on stone).

Value: \$75,000.

The Uraeus of Horus: This uraeus is the most common among Cabalists; it is often worn by Middle Circle members during ceremonies and special hearings. According to legend, these uraei were consecrated to (and inscribed with the name of) the vulture-goddess Nephthys until some time in the first century A.D. Their reported qualities also changed, although exactly how is unclear.

Gem: Diamond.

Enchantments: Truthsayer, Aura, Sense Danger.

Value: \$25,000.

The Uraeus of Isis: This uraeus is quite rare; its appearance once heralded civil wars and power struggles. It can read the aura and blood lineage of anyone of royal descent, locate a missing member of any royal family, or quicken any royal womb.

Gem: Sapphire.

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Enchantments: Unknown, but include Aura.

Value: \$240,000.

The Uraeus of Nut: The powers and spells of this uraeus vary depending upon the formation of the stars. Under certain constellations, it is merely a flying cap; in others, it allows the wearer to see ghosts; in still others, it allows astral projection as the psionic power. Its rumored effects, under very rare skies, include interstellar pathwalking, comet summoning, and plague control. Individual uraei of Nut may have varying effects, as well, since each known uraeus shows a different constellation.

Gem: Amethyst.

Enchantments: Various and unknown, but including Fly, Sense Spirit, Planar Visit, and so forth.

Value: \$70,000 to priceless.

The Uraeus of Osiris: This is the uraeus of mysteries. Its wearers can read any inscription or text written before 31 B.C., provide the correct responses in rituals, and give the True Names of (supposedly) 999 entities on sight. Rumor has it that anyone killed while wearing this uraeus is bound inside its topaz, and forced to tell the wearer anything he knows.

Gem: Topaz.

Enchantments: Limited and peculiar versions of Compel Truth, Soul Jar, and Mind–Reading, among others.

Value: \$210,000 and up depending on item history.

The Uraeus of Shu: As far as the Cabal has determined, this uraeus simply allows the wearer to cast the spells enchanted into it. Its design and purpose remain unclear, although Shu's identification with emptiness and chaos (deriving from his role as god of the air) implies there is yet more to discover about this item. Possibly, multiple wearers could cast more spells ceremonially, or casting the known spells of the uraeus in sequence or under specific conditions might trigger some as yet undetermined magical effect or power. Currently, only seven are known to exist; the Grand Master Cagliostro owns four of them.

Gem: Pale quartz.

Enchantments: Shatter, Pentagram, Weather Dome, Undo.

Value: \$102,000.

The Uraeus of Tefnut: Tefnut, the sister of Shu, is often considered the embodiment of order to his chaos. The wearer of this uraeus can instinctively and accurately place in order any series of events, objects, concepts, steps, and so forth. The things to be placed in order must be known to the wearer, although he need not know how they interrelate. Given any ten people, for example, the wearer can tell their birth sequence, the alphabetical order of their names, their order by rank in the Cabal, their distance by blood from the House of Romanov, in what order they must die to placate the demon

Focalor, or anything else expressible in similar terms.

Gem: Emerald.

Enchantments: Unknown.

Value: \$188,000.

8.2 Techniques

The Cabal knows at least two techniques both older and more flexible than Hermetic magic. Investigating either is dangerous, but the rewards tempt even the most timid or sensible.

8.2.1 Demonic Contracts

Between demonic persistence and human corruptibility, numerous fissures run from the Abyss to the Material Realm. Where these fissures emerge (often in pre-existing "soft places" in reality, or at ley nexi in the dark of the moon), summoning a demon becomes disturbingly simple. Some would-be necromancers solve the problem themselves by summoning a demon without a proper anchoring-and-binding pentagram, resulting in the quick slide back to the Abyss of a well-fed demon. But most reliable grimoires provide reliable pentagrams, making demon summoning deceptively easy. That, of course, is just the way the demons want it.

8.2.1.1 Casting Demonically-Assisted Magic

In this form of magic, a demon (or occasionally, a group of demons) actually casts the spell *through* the sorcerer or occultist. The demon provides some or all of the magical energy, and likely improved performance. The "caster" provides a conduit and focus for the demonic magic, paying a spiritual price. A spellcaster may always use more normal magics if he possesses them; calling upon the powers of the Abyss is always voluntary. Before any wizard can cast his first demon-assisted spell, he needs to summon a demon in order to establish contact (see below). Once a demon has been contracted, the caster need not summon it again to cast any other spell with demonic aid.

Spells "cast black" require at least two full seconds of Concentration to cast, regardless of high skill. Blocking spells are the only exceptions. Hermetic magi can use standard Hermetic correspondences to focus the spell's energy, but at half effectiveness; the Abyss taints and twists decanic flows. Penalties, however, retain full effect.

The energy cost of the spell may be reduced by any amount up to *triple* the caster's Occultism or Thaumatology skill (whichever is higher). This is applied before cost reductions for high skill. This is the portion of the spell "paid for" by the demon.

8.2.1.2 Non-Mage Occultists

Characters with *no* knowledge of spellcasting (even those lacking Magical Aptitude) may employ demon-assisted magic. The character must have some basic knowledge of invocations (Occultism skill at 8+), and a clear idea of what *kind* of spell he wishes to cast. Many books of black magic can convey this knowledge to the interested, and reading descriptions

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of spells in old grimoires is often sufficient for this end.

In game terms, any sufficiently skilled occultist with the desire to cast a spell can simply *do so*, at an effective skill level equal to his IQ or half his Occultism skill, whichever is better. Ceremonial Magic is required, and the minimum casting time is 60 seconds. Furthermore, the mage *must* allow the demons he invokes to pay *as much of the energy cost as possible*. Otherwise, use all normal rules for magic in general. The GM should decide how much ceremony any given grimoire requires, keeping in mind that a demon *must* be anchored to, and contained within, an unbroken pentacle. Many spells in the "black books" require candles or incense, additional symbols or sigils, etc. Often, these ingredients replicate the correspondences the spell would require; the GM may allow these modifiers as per normal Hermetic magic, at half normal effectiveness. If the spellcaster is unfamiliar with the spell's language (usually a mongrel combination of Latin, Greek, and Hebrew in such debased grimoires), the GM may require an additional IQ roll or impose penalties on the spellcasting die roll.

Genuine magi may also use these rules to gain demonic assistance in casting any spell that they don't already know (subject to GM approval — not all demons know all magics). The ease and convenience of demonic magic even tempts Cabalists, especially those impatient for advancement, or anxious for their mentors to teach them more spells. Some suspicious Cabalists spread rumors of demonic involvement about any adept who seems too proficient with too little study.

8.2.1.3 Locating, Invoking, and Contracting With a Demon

Finding a spell for demon summoning is relatively simple given suitable bibliographic resources and sufficient persistence. Even after centuries of Cabalistic cleanup operations, the best efforts of the Inquisition, and the deliberate promulgation of any number of dangerously flawed forgeries, hundreds or even thousands of functional demonic invocations remain accessible to the determined scholar of the dark arts. (An uncomfortable number of these rituals have leaked back out into the world thanks to the characteristic sloppiness and carelessness of those Cabalists who make a crutch out of demonic magic themselves.) In game terms, all of these formulae, rituals, incantations, etc. simply recreate the Summon Demon spell (p. M74), only without any prerequisites *including* Magery.

The GM should decide how much time or ceremony any given invocation from a grimoire requires, keeping in mind that a demon *must* be anchored to, and contained within, an unbroken pentacle — though not necessarily a Pentagram spell. Without such protection, the demon will attack the caster, dragging the unlucky fool (or his soul) back to the Abyss for dinner. A demon not anchored in Assiah with a sigil (such as a pentagram) must spend *ten times* the normal fatigue to materialize. Many spells in the "black books" require candles or incense, additional symbols or sigils, etc. Often, these ingredients replicate the correspondences the spell would require; the GM may allow these modifiers as per normal Hermetic magic up to a maximum of +4. (If the GM is using such modifiers, he should also assess any applicable penalties, with no maximum.) If the spellcaster is unfamiliar with the spell's language (usually a combination of Latin, Greek, and Hebrew), the GM may require an additional IQ roll or impose penalties on the spellcasting die roll. When the demon appears, the caster may dicker with the demon as with any spirit, but in order to use that demon for assisted spellcasting later, he must sign a contract in his own blood. Standard contracts exist in many grimoires, and demons are always delighted to provide contracts for summoners who don't have them. This contract need only establish a service relationship, subject to the limitations below; any additional benefits (souls, buried treasure, the love of the fair Marguerite, etc.) are between the contracting parties. As long as the mage doesn't overcommit himself (promising his soul to two separate demons, for example), he may sign as many demonic contracts as he can find demons to invoke.

Particularly vile or greedy demons will proffer contracts with "pre-paid" levels of the Black Penalty (see below).

8.2.1.4 Limitations

Demonically-assisted magic is powerful, but may not be for everybody:

Motives: Demonically-assisted magic may not be used to benefit others in any direct way, unless, *in the GMs opinion*, to do so will ultimately further the unpleasant cause of the demon providing the power (for magic provided by *benevolent* spirits, see *GURPS Religion*). Black magic will never heal the wound of a virtuous man, bring happiness other than grim satisfaction, or provide comfort unless it serves the dark purposes which only the Game Master is presumed to understand. Black magic is for doing Bad Things, preferably to Nice People. Demonically-assisted magic *can* be used for any "practical" function like repairing the caster's house, heating rocks for warmth, and so on. Any attempt to bypass these restrictions will result in the caster being "cut off" by his supplying demon; he will not be able to gain demonic assistance again until it is suitably appeased.

Interpretation of this rule is subjective; necessarily so. The GM may also wish to play varying "camps" of demons, or individual demons, very differently from one another in terms of restrictions.

Critical Failure: Any failure of demonically-assisted magic is treated as a critical failure, and any *actual* critical failure automatically summons a different demon who will attempt to wreak havoc (attacking the caster if he gets in the way). The mage *may* use black magic to fight this demon; there is little honor, and less fellow-feeling in the Abyss.

8.2.1.5 The Black Penalty

Once tempted by demonic magic, darkness creeps into the soul. At the end of any day on which an assisted spell has been cast, the user must make an IQ roll at a penalty equal to the total energy "borrowed" that day from demonic helpers. Strong and Weak Will apply, as does Magical Aptitude (if applicable). If the roll is a success, nothing happens. If the roll fails, the mage gains a single level of the Black Penalty for every 10 points in the margin of failure (round up). This is a taint on the wizard's soul.

The Black Penalty is a skill penalty to any spell cast *without* black magic. The presence of this taint is clearly visible to the Aura spell or to those with the Awareness advantage, and any character with Magery 3 gets a Vision roll to notice "the pallor" when first encountering a character so tainted.

As long as any level of the Black Penalty is present in the mage, his soul remains a window to the Abyss. Even his other magic suffers the same Critical Failure problem as demonically-assisted magic, making it *very* dangerous.

For non-mages, the Black Penalty isn't as problematic, since normal, "white" magic is unavailable to them, but the *next* stage is just as dangerous for any user.

It should be noted that the presence of the Black Penalty, all by itself, is not a reflection of the mage's morality or the ultimate fate of his soul. Not yet, anyway. Rather, it is a kind of psychic residue — demonic ichor left on the hands of a guilty wizard.

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8.2.1.6 Total Darkness

The Black Penalty is limited to –10, and once it reaches this level, the user is said to have achieved "total darkness." Any *virtuous* disadvantages (such as honesty, chastity, Sense of Duty to friends) are quickly lost, possibly to be replaced with some dark opposite. Furthermore, the user gains Addiction (Abyssal Energies), a –10 point disadvantage (demonically–assisted magic is both highly addictive and "cheap" for game purposes). Mages that reach this level may not enter Atziluth, and should they stray too close to the Abyss, they may be dragged into it by their demonic attraction. The Archangels, and any Jewish, Christian, or Muslim cleric would consider them damned. Any increase in the character's overall value should be counted as a debt against future earned points (see sidebar, p.B81).

Users must still make end–of–day IQ rolls when demonically–assisted magic is used, but at a +10 bonus to their IQ. Any failed roll results in the user gaining a random 5–point disadvantage, or losing a 5–point advantage, or the equivalent in reduced attributes, for *every* point by which the roll fails! Thus, a roll missed by 4 results in 20 points of advantages being lost, or 20 points of disadvantages gained, or a combination of the two. The GM is encouraged to be cruel.

8.2.1.7 Soulwashing

Once a mage has become tainted with the Black Penalty, recovery is a painful and difficult undertaking. Purging the darkness from one's soul requires a sincere desire to do so, and a period of total magical abstinence lasting (20–Will) days for *each* level of Black Penalty to be removed (minimum 1 day per level). During this period, any sort of sensual pleasures must also be avoided — the use of black magic is a sensual delight, and the reminder is far too strong. Users with Gluttony or Lecherousness are in trouble . . .

If the user has achieved Total Darkness, he must also buy off the addiction and survive the withdrawal if he intends to keep his slate clean.

And the priests (and the Archangels) say he's still damned. Taking care of *that* is entirely a matter to be roleplayed.

8.2.2 Words of Power

There are 36 Words of Power, one for each decan. Devout Cabalists believe that God spoke these 36 Words to create the universe; had even one of them been different (or even pronounced differently), the universe would be profoundly altered. If anyone (besides the Prime Mover within Atziluth) knows all 36, he keeps the knowledge to himself; to the best of the Cabal's understanding, only 23 of the Words have so far been discovered, and modern magi do not remember or have access to all of those. Persistent rumor says that each Word can be found somewhere in the Realms; carved on the wall of the Abyss, inscribed inside the Koh–I–Noor diamond, encoded within the death–song of the phoenix, and so forth.

Anyone who can read a Word (which will depend on the alphabet in which he finds it) can attempt to speak it with a successful IQ roll. Nobody can be forced (although they might be coerced or persuaded) to speak a Word of Power, and the speaker must spend at least three seconds in concentration; the shape of the syllables requires attention and willing direction. On a success, the Word can be spoken; on a critical success, the speaker can direct the effect of the Word. On a failure, the Word comes out as gibberish; on a critical failure, the Word misfires within the speaker, doing 1d of crushing damage to his larynx.

Successfully speaking a Word causes 360 energy points' worth of magical effect everywhere within earshot, with a skill level of 36 as if cast by an entity with Magery 10 (see Extended Magery, p. 00). The syllables and sound of the Word being spoken will reverberate throughout the area, but without magic or the Great Art of Memory (p. 00), listeners cannot remember the Word itself. The nature of the effect will depend on the decan; for those decans associated with spell colleges, the Word can execute spells in *GURPS Magic* or *GURPS Grimoire*. Use those spells for guidelines for the power of Words not tied to colleges, keeping in mind that Words are meant to be impressive, powerful, and unpredictable. Speaking the Word of Fire in a room, for example, might launch a 10d Fireball from the speaker, Create Fire across three of the room's walls, puddle a few pistols to slag, cook off all the ammunition in the area, and inspire love poetry in all witnesses. A Word of Power is a magical explosive, and the best a speaker can hope for is a shaped charge.

Speaking a Word costs 360 points of energy, which the speaker may pay with Fatigue, HT, powerstones, or in any other applicable fashion. Only speakers with Occultism, Thaumatology, or Magery can use group magic to share the cost; rolling against the appropriate skill or against the speaker's best-known spell in the appropriate college. If the speaker does not have the resources to bear the cost, the Word will kill him (by Fatigue and then HT drain) and taper off in a whisper. A Will roll at -2 is necessary to voluntarily stop a Word midway through speaking it; the speaker then takes damage as a critical failure from choking back the magical energies. If a speaker's concentration is interrupted (by a gunshot wound, or psionic attack, etc.), he must make a Will roll to keep speaking it, or take the 1d of choking damage for a misfired Word. After an aborted speaking, special effects tied to the Word's nature might manifest (at the GM's option) but the effect on the situation should be minimal. An aborted Word of Fire might make people in the room get uncomfortably warm, cause a few loose papers to begin smoldering, and scorch the wallpaper. GMs should feel free to punish players who try to get magical effects "for free" by speaking the first syllable of a Word and stopping midway through.

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Much of the intrigue, and much of the danger, in the life of a Cabalist comes from the other beings he encounters in his quests, missions, and adventures. Even the Earth holds many more creatures than either orthodox religion or orthodox science admits, and the Four Realms teem with being from the tiniest viruses to the terrible world–rending entities Leviathan and Bahamut. The creatures from *GURPS Spirits*, *GURPS Fantasy Bestiary*, *GURPS Creatures of the Night* and *GURPS Undead* are all "fair game" for a *GURPS Cabal* GM. Many of them might even be useful player character types, for a slightly more bizarre game. Selections from this panoply should be governed solely by GM aesthetics, based on the campaign's genre, mode, and background.

9.1 Beasts of Assiah

The hidden corners of the Earth conceal monsters of all kinds; the teeming cities of mankind shroud still more monstrosities beneath their streets and above their cornices. In addition to the nigh–mandatory yeti (p. BE113) and lake monsters (pp. WT97–98), GMs might consider rockworms (pp. BO97–98), ghouls (pp. FF78–81), and Set beasts (p. EG108), among the other creatures listed above and below.

9.1.1 Gargoiles Vrais

Some gargoyles are simply stone golems (p. 00) given more fanciful shapes; others are enslaved earth elementals or genii loci bound within statues. It may have been from these models that the Grand Master Hugues de Stenay created his own gargoyles (sometimes called *gargoiles vrais* to differentiate them from "conventional" gargoyles) to serve as his indefatigable coursing beasts in the War of the Elm against Garravin during the Middle Ages. Gargoiles vrais have stony skin, massive talons and powerful jaws for claspng their targets, broad wings, and fearsome countenances. They can track a blood–scent to the edge of the Abyss if need be, and never tire.

Attribute Modifiers: ST +10 [175]; DX +3 [30]; IQ –5 [–40]; HT +10 [175]

Advantages: Damage Resistance 10 [30]; Passive Defense 2 [50]; Dark Vision [25]; Doesn't Breathe [20]; Doesn't Eat or Drink [10]; Doesn't Sleep [20]; Enhanced Move (flying) [30]; Flight (wings, cannot hover) [24]; Injury Tolerance (No Blood, No Brain, No Cutting or Impale Bonus, No Neck) [45]; Spirit–Jumper (must move, –10%) [72]; Talons [40]; Fangs [10]

Disadvantages: Dependency (Mana, infrequent, daily) [–60]; Dread (mirrored glass: common) [–20]; Inconvenient Size [–10]; Innumerate [–5]; Monstrous Appearance [–25]; No Sense of Humor [–10]; Obsession (hunting target) [–5]; Poverty (Dead Broke) [–25]; Presentient [–20]; Reprogrammable Duty [–25]; Slave Mentality [–40]; Unhealing (may be repaired by magical stonemasons) [–20].

Inherent Knacks: Seeker [20]; Trace (may use blood scent or magical contagion) [20]

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9.1.2 Lemurians

A hundred thousand years ago, the ambient magical energy of the material world began embedding itself in matter. Perhaps some long-forgotten race of gods, or the Aethyrs themselves, or simple thaumalogical processes, drove this evolution; the end result was a quasi-sentient race of beings with a deep psionic connection to the magical fields. Lemurians resemble giant (15 to 25 feet tall) four-armed apes with three eyes set evenly around their heads. (Some sub-breeds of Lemurians have only one eye, and became the Cyclopes of Greek mythology.) In partnership with powerful spirits, the Lemurians built vast megapoleis, reshaping mountain ranges and leveling islands to suit their guides' aesthetics. The mighty Lemurian supercontinent was unstable, held together by magical and psionic energy — energy that, when uncontrollably released, vaporized Lemuria in catastrophe. Even the few Lemurians who survived the fall no longer remember whether some caste of Lemurians revolted against their masters, or whether Lemuria collapsed in the Deluge ending the first creation. One Lemurian legend claims that Lemuria was destroyed in a great war between Lemuria and the "Dragons of Light," about which very little is known.

Lemurians stay deep in the shadows of the world, hiding behind vibratory barriers in the remnants of their long-forgotten cyclopean cities. The Red Cliffs of Madagascar, the high mesa country of the American Southwest, the deepest outback of Australia, and the Upper Shan mountains of Burma hold the largest surviving Lemurian populations, tribal sodalities of fifty or a hundred. Adventurous Cabalists such as the Golden Lodge of Asten enter these remote areas hoping to steal working Lemurian crystal devices (p. 00). A few individuals, more advanced and intelligent, may still live in Tibet or northern California.

Attribute Modifiers: ST +10 [110]; +6 "Natural" ST (p. CI8) [27]; IQ -3 [-20]; HT +5 [60].

Advantages: 4 Extra Hit Points [20]; Enhanced Move [10]; two Extra Arms [20]; Extra Reach: 1 Hex [20 or 40, depending on number of arms; very large Lemurians might buy extra hexes of reach]; 360-Degree Vision [25]; Common Sense (representing their capacity for "spiritual guidance" by reading mana-flows) [10]; Intuition [15]; Telesend Power 10 [15]; and Telesend Skill at IQ+3 [10].

Disadvantages: Absent-Mindedness [-15]; Non-Iconographic [-10]; Presentient [-20]; and Short Attention Span [-10].

9.1.3 Molobrians

These qliphothic entities (see *Qlippoth*, p. 00) managed to gain a foothold in Assiah during the Rectification of Gyges in 652 B.C. Although they can mask themselves as human, their true form is that of hideous, pig-faced, grublike beings with pallid skin and gaping mouths full of needle-sharp teeth. They spawn in areas where qliphothic energies are strongest, especially near manor-houses tainted by incest, or in the desperate slums and refugee camps of the modern world. Molobrians can eat garbage, sewage, and offal, but prefer human flesh if they can get it. An outbreak or infestation of Molobrians can panic local Lodges into sterilizing the whole city by fire or ritual magic. Rivals often accuse unscrupulous Cabalists such as the Thousand Get of Sekhmet of breeding Molobrians as shock troops for the dirtiest and foulest missions.

Attribute Modifiers: ST +4 [45]; DX +4 [45]; IQ -2 [-15]; HT +4 [45]

Advantages: Cast Iron Stomach [15]; Decreased Life Support [10]; Immunity to Disease [10]; Immunity to Poison [15];

Injury Tolerance (no vitals) [5]; Mindshare (Global Consciousness, Maintenance drone, 1 mile range) [55]; Sharp Teeth [5]

Disadvantages: Appearance: Horrific [-30]; Dependency: Human misery (Common, daily) [-15]; Odious Racial Habit (eats humans) [-15]; Sadism [-15]

Racially-learned Skill: Disguise (as human) at IQ+4 [10]

This writeup represents a pack of eight Molobrians at full growth. A single Molobrian has an IQ of 5, which increases by 1 for each doubling of the number of drones.

9.1.4 Serpent-Lords, or Reptoids

If the Lemurians are a mystery, the Serpent-Lords (as they prefer to be called) are complete enigmas. Their straight-faced claim is to be the current inheritors of a 200-million-year-old reptile civilization that first flourished in the steaming swamps of the Jurassic. Indeed, they closely resemble a smaller, more fully erect *Deinonychus*, complete with tail, although minus the razor-sharp talons. The Serpent-Lords blandly refer to Atlantis and even Lemuria as "mayfly kingdoms" unworthy of discussion. In the modern era, Serpent-Lords operate primarily within human society, as their ability to shapeshift into human form (gained, they blithely assure questioners, after millions of years spent eating humans) allows them essentially free rein there. In fact, some Serpent-Lords have established themselves in positions of power and influence in human society, especially in the oldest and most exalted European aristocracies. (The reptoids are great liars, however, and will often claim to have ruled humanity since the days of Sumer.) A few Serpent-Lord cities still exist deep in the Congo and Mekong basins and the Central American or Brazilian rain forests. The Serpent-Lords have a great affinity for magic, which they claim to have invented. The aristocratic European reptoid families intermarry to breed for psionic ability.

Attribute Modifiers: ST +1 [10]; IQ +3 [30]; HT +2 [20]

Advantages: Acute Taste and Smell +2 [4]; Alertness +3 [15]; Claws [20]; Combat Reflexes [15]; Early Maturation [5]; Enhanced Move x1 [10]; Longevity [5]; Multiple Forms (snake and human) [10]; Night Vision [10]; Peripheral Vision [15]; Sharp Teeth [5]; Temperature Tolerance [5]; Toughness [10]

Disadvantages: Attentive [-1]; Color Blindness [-10]; Hidebound [-5]; Intolerance [-10]; Inscrutable [-1]; Odious Racial Habit (eating sentient beings) [-15]; Reputation -2 (cruel, selfish liars) [-10]; Sleepy (50%) [-10]

Skills: Hypnotism at IQ+1 [6]; Shapeshift (between forms) at IQ+2 [16]

9.1.5 Trolls

Only the toughest, most resilient members of the "Races of Cain" survived the onslaught of the Iron Age, Christianity, and industrialization. Descended from the monstrous creatures created in the backwash of the Deluge, the trolls are the most numerous species left in the Material Realm. They resemble large, powerful, ugly humans with prognathous jaws and patchy hair — some trolls favor wigs to cover their misshapen skulls. They have gravitated to cities; long exposure has slowly given them more resistance to iron, and there are more victims there to feed on without arousing notice.

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Human sorcerers have also knotted more useful ley networks together in the cities, which enables trolls to retain some magical vigor.

Attribute Modifiers: Enhanced ST 24/13 [99]; DX -2 [-15]; IQ -2 [-15]; HT +4 [45]

Advantages: Acute Taste and Smell +1 [2]; DR +3 [9]; Dark Vision [25]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Magic Resistance +2 [4]; PD +1 [25]

Disadvantages: Appearance: Hideous [-10]; Bad Temper [-10]; Dependency: (Mana, infrequent, weekly) [-40]; Dread (holy objects, rare, 1 hex) [-5]; Odious Racial Habit (eats humans) [-15]; Vow (must accept riddle challenge if offered) [-15]; Vulnerability (iron, occasional, 1d) [-10]; Weakness (sunlight, very common, 1d per 5 minutes) [-30]

Skill: Hidden Lore: Riddles at IQ+4 [10]

9.2 Creatures of Yetzirah

Unconstrained by terrestrial physics or biology, without even "up" or "down" to worry about, life in Yetzirah takes on every possible shape and nature. Any of the beings from *GURPS Spirits* may be found in Yetzirah, often in unaccustomed roles and guises.

9.2.1 Summoning Entities

Summoning various entities to gain information — on an enemy, on buried treasure, on further magical lore — lies at the heart of much Cabalistic practice. Hostile or mindless entities such as demons and elementals usually attack their summoner, which is why the Pentagram spell (p. M62) is so important. Less aggressive beings can be negotiated or bargained with; sufficiently powerful magi can actually control summoned entities. In addition to cajoling further spells out of Aethyrs, or magical aid from egregores, or travel directions from Planetary Lords, magi use summoned entities to gain all manner of leverage. Summoning the family spirit, or Lar, of a rival may turn up any number of skeletons in the closet; summoning the genius loci of a skyscraper may give a technically-inclined mage information on the building's security system; summoning the daimon of Alexander the Great or Robert E. Lee may provide useful battlefield advice. (The daimon of a living person, his *parhedros*, can only be summoned or otherwise affected if separated from its host.)

For a game with a high incidence of summonings and interaction with spirit beings, the GM is encouraged to replace the prerequisite for the Planar Summons and Summon Demon spells (p. M74) with one spell from four different colleges (rather than ten), and to add Planar Summons to the Gate college. For balance, Planar Summons castings should cost at least the subject spirit's Will+10 energy points. *GURPS Spirits* will also be very useful in such games.

9.2.2 Astral Parasites

These mindless entities most resemble Portuguese man-of-war jellyfish, with a large bladder (usually capable of holding 15–45 fatigue points) on top of a mass of tendrils and cilia. They drift on the winds of the Astral Realm, drawn to expenditures of astral energy — usually magic or psionics. When they drift into their victim (consider their DX 9 for such attacks), they form a powerful astral bond — going ethereal, teleporting, and other potentially sound escapes simply

drag the parasite along. Being dragged into to the Material Realm does eliminate them, however; they explode in a moist ectoplasmic mist, often stained with blood and brain fluid. (This can lead to embarrassing questions, if the return happens in public, or if the police crime labs check the mage's sanctum for some reason.) Most astral parasites drain fatigue; rarer varieties drain ST, psychic Power, or levels of Will, or even skills and advantages! To defeat an astral parasite takes magic (although some varieties have evolved a level or two of Magic Resistance) or rapid psionic attacks before the gravid beast drains the necessary energies for defense from its victim. (Subtract any hits from a "HT pool" equal to the parasite's current store of sustenance plus one-fifth its capacity. Thus an astral parasite with a top capacity of 30 fatigue points could withstand 36 points of magical damage before fleeing.) Overfeeding the things is another defense. If a traveler can release energy points equalling twice the parasite's capacity at once (from a powerstone, for example), the creature will pop loose, sated for the time being. ("Overfeeding" an astral parasite that consumes Luck, for example, could be much trickier.) Many astral travelers believe that the yithoghu have been specially breeding these vile entities for ferocity, capacity, and special appetites. It is true that schools of astral parasites flock around the Polished Citadel and sometimes seem to follow yithoghu slaver bands on their raids, much as jackals follow lions.

9.2.3 Egregores

Occasionally, the ectoplasmic fabric of Yetzirah becomes especially yielding or vulnerable to outside stimuli. Especially when a spell is particularly important to the caster, or is cast at a soft point in the Realms, its energies infuse the ectoplasm and create an egregore. Eggregores can take any shape, although they usually resemble either the caster of the spell that created them or balls or disks of glowing light of the appropriate decanic color. They imprint on their caster's will, and seek (often in a halting or inept way) to carry it out. They remain able to cast the spell that they embody as long as their supply of fatigue remains. They are drawn to spells or casters similar to the ones present at their own origin in order to drain off magical energy to power their existence; spells cast in Yetzirah without some kind of shield (Astral Block, Pentagram, etc.) can simply fizzle out, draining into nearby egregores. Even shielded spells can attract egregores to the area — since they are made of the same magic, they can always detect it.

Attribute Modifiers: IQ -2 [-15]

Advantages: Inherent Magic (spell that created them) [variable]; Single-Minded [5]; Spirit Form (cannot ride in vehicles, or use Poltergeist Effect, Possession, or Probability Manipulation) [35]; Unfazeable [15]

Disadvantages: Cannot Learn [-30]; Dead Broke [-25]; Dependency (Mana, infrequent, constantly) [-100]; Hidebound [-5]; Low Empathy [-15]; No Sense of Humor [-10]; Obdurate [-10]; Reprogrammable Duty [-25]; Slave Mentality [-40]

9.2.4 Eidolons

Eidolons are shadows or after-images of beings of immense power. They possess enough "reality" to act independently, although their powers, appearance, and natures usually closely mirror the originals. Some eidolons actively serve as avatars or servants of their original, especially the eidolons of Hindu deities. Others take on independent action, but often find their behavior constrained or shaped by their "shadow" nature. Occult wine historians of the oenophilic Horns of Bes-Ammon Lodge believe that Alexander the Great was actually an eidolon of Dionysos, drawn to India, consumed by alcohol, and suffering his body (his empire) to be torn apart by his worshipers. The various Aethyrs often work through eidolons, especially in the lower Realms. Other entities, such as Leviathan and Bahamut, cast eidolons that alter or twist

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in the magical currents, creating many of the "unique" monsters of the Realms from the Loch Ness Monster to the Theban sphinx.

9.2.5 Elementals

Although sloppy occult scholars have used the word for any non-material, mindless entity, true elementals are living essences of one of the four cosmic forces: Air (sylphs), Water (undines), Fire (salamanders), and Earth (gnomes). As such, they remain on the Elemental Planes (sidebar, p. 00) unless summoned elsewhere, or created out of their physical element by means of the Create Elemental spell. Such artificially created elementals may be considered Unliving (p. CI100). If they reach 0 HT, they are destroyed.

9.2.5.1 Air Elemental (Sylph)

Attribute Modifiers: IQ -4 [-30]

Advantages: Enhanced Move (Body of Air-based flight; p.CI50) [40]; Fz Sense [10]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Injury Tolerance (all) [50]; Magery 3 (Air only) [22]; Spirit Form (physical form, +80%; can't use dream travel, tap fatigue, possession, poltergeist effect, or probability alteration, -80%) [100].

Disadvantages: Body of Air (Unswitchable: Carry No Encumbrance, -10%) [-27]; Callous [-6]; Dependency (Mana, common, constantly) [-25]; Impulsiveness [-10]; Uneducated [-5].

Quirks, Features and Taboo Traits: Affected by Elemental Spells [0]; Distractable [-1].

Innate Spell: Air Jet at IQ+6 [10, includes Magery bonus]

Template Cost: 129 points.

9.2.5.2 Earth Elemental (Gnome)

Attribute Modifiers: IQ -4 [-30]

Advantages: Body of Earth (unswitchable, -10%) [36]; DR 2 [6]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Injury Tolerance (All) [50]; Imperturbable [10]; Magery 3 (Earth only) [22]; Sensitive Touch (Only to sense ground vibrations, -50%) [5]; Spirit Form (physical form, +80%; can't use dream travel, tap fatigue, possession, poltergeist effect, or probability alteration, -80%) [100]; Tunnel (Speed 2) [60].

Disadvantages: Appearance (Monstrous) [-25]; Callous [-6]; Dependency (Contact with the ground, common, daily) [-15]; Dependency (Mana, common, constantly) [-25]; Oblivious [-3]; Reclusive [-10]; Reduced Move -2 [-10]; Stubbornness [-5]; Uneducated [-5].

Quirks, Features and Taboo Traits: Affected by Elemental Spells [0].

Innate Spell: Stone Missile at IQ+6 [10, includes Magery bonus]

Template Cost: 176 points.

9.2.5.3 Fire Elemental (Salamander)

Attribute Modifiers: IQ -4 [-30]

Advantages: Body of Fire 3 (unswitchable, -40%) [9]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Infravision [15]; Injury Tolerance (All) [50]; Invulnerability (Fire/Heat) [100]; Magery 3 (Fire only) [22]; Spirit Form (physical form, +80%; can't use dream travel, tap fatigue, possession, poltergeist effect, or probability alteration, -80%) [100].

Disadvantages: Callous [-6]; Dependency (full immersion in fire, common, daily) [-15]; Dependency (Mana, common, constantly) [-25]; Impulsiveness [-10]; Overconfidence [-10]; Pyromania [-15]; Self-Centered [-10]; Thalassophobia (Mild) [-10]; Uneducated [-5].

Quirks, Features and Taboo Traits: Affected by Elemental Spells [0].

Innate Spell: Fire Jet at IQ+6 [10, includes Magery bonus]

Template Cost: 180 points

9.2.5.4 Water Elemental (Undine)

Attribute Modifiers: IQ -4 [-30]

Advantages: Amphibious [10]; Enhanced Move 1 (Swimming) [10]; Fast Regeneration (Only in large bodies of water, -30%) [35]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Injury Tolerance (All) [50]; Magery 3 (Water only) [22]; Spirit Form (physical form, +80%; can't use dream travel, tap fatigue, possession, poltergeist effect, or probability alteration, -80%) [100].

Disadvantages: Body of Water (Unswitchable, Carry No Encumbrance, -10%) [-18]; Callous [-6]; Dependency (Full immersion in water, common, daily) [-15]; Dependency (Mana, common, constantly) [-25]; Impulsiveness [-10]; Overconfidence [-10]; Pyrophobia (Mild) [-10]; Uneducated [-5].

Quirks, Features and Taboo Traits: Affected by Elemental Spells [0].

Innate Spell: Water Jet at IQ+6 [10, includes Magery bonus]

Template Cost: 118 points

9.2.6 Para-Elementals

So far, the Cabal has only certain knowledge of para-elementals composed of two overlapping elemental fields. (Theorists at the Black School of Martense speculate that multi-elemental para-elementals could be the missing link between elementals and numina.) Possibly due to their more complex nature, para-elementals tend to be smarter than pure elementals. The djinn (para-elementals of Heat, or of Airy Fire), the Cabal's longtime rivals (see sidebar, p. 00),

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have actually maintained a continuous, hierarchical society in the Near Eastern deserts of Assiah and the adjacent sectors of the Astral Realm for over twelve millennia. By contrast, the evanescent rosae, the para–elementals of Dew (Airy Water) only live for one morning, although the wise magus can learn many secrets of the dawn, or travel to the Moon, with their help. The djinn's cousins the steropes, para–elementals of Lightning, or Fiery Air, were only occasionally invoked by ancient seers and augurs, but have found a new existence in modern electrical and electronic equipment, and a new identity as "gremlins" or "glitches." Arges, the immortal para–elementals of Magma, or Fiery Earth, dwell primarily in volcanoes, and are superb (if by now rather primitive) craftsmen of amazing strength. Although they can be cruel (especially if exiled or mistreated), their cousins the mephiti (para–elementals of Smoke, or Earthly Fire) are downright sadistic. The taxonomy of the para–elementals is hardly exhausted: one of Erasmus Rooke's great contributions to Cabalistic learning was his discovery of the pneumae, para–elementals of Steam, or Fiery Water, a combination previously thought to be impossible. Among Rooke's current projects is an investigation into the existence of brontes, the hypothetical para–elementals of Thunder, or Earthly Air.

9.2.6.1 Djinn

The djinn are among the most physically powerful and imposing of the para–elementals, possibly because their organized society and long existence has given them increased "reality" and more magical potency. Their long struggle with the Cabal has likely weeded out the weaker members of their species, as well.

Attribute Modifiers: ST +10 [110]; DX +4 [45]; IQ +1 [10]; HT +4 [45]

Advantages: Alertness +3 [15]; Body of Air (Heavy Encumbrance +100%) [100]; DR 3 [9]; Enhanced Move 2 (Body of Air flight) [20]; Extra Fatigue +5 [15]; Extra Hit Points +3 [15]; Magery 2 [25]; Night Vision [10]; PD 3 [75]; Spirit Form (Unlimited Lifespan +30%, Physical Form +80%, Can't use dream travel, tap fatigue, or possession –40%) [170]

Disadvantages: Bad Temper [–10]; Bully [–10]; Dread (Seal of Solomon) [–10]; Excommunicated [–10]; Gullibility [–10]; Hideous [–20]; Overconfidence [–10]; Social Stigma (Outcast) [–15]

Quirks, Features and Taboo Traits: Proud [–1]; Affected by Astral Block, Pentagram, and Turn Spirit [0]; Can be imprisoned by Seal of Solomon [0].

Innate Spells: None, but djinn have at least 15 points to spend on spells like Fear, various Illusions, Recover Strength, and Rejoin.

Skills: Brawling (P/E) at DX [1]; Shapeshifting (M/VH) at IQ+2 [16]

Template Cost: 600 points

9.2.7 Lucifugae

The *lucifugum*, or "fly–the–light," is a pure predator spirit, carrying its unfortunate victim off into the depths of Yetzirah to drain. Like vampires, lucifugae take sustenance from the magical energies inherent in blood. First described by the Grand Master (and prime minister of Byzantium) Michael Psellus in the 11th century, the lucifugae dwell within shadows, crossing over to Assiah through shadow and hunting by night, since bright light disintegrates them. The most

common depictions in Cabal bestiaries show them as winged and fanged hybrids of wyvern and wolf, although the absolutely black nocturnal predators are difficult to see clearly even with Darkvision. With increased city lighting cutting into the lucifugae hunting grounds, they have become more daring, more dangerous — and much, much hungrier.

Attribute Modifiers: ST +15 (No Fine Manipulators –40%) [90]; DX +4 [45]; IQ –4 [–30]; HT +4 [45].

Advantages: Bite [30]; Dark Vision [25]; Flight (Winged) [30]; Magery [15]; Scales and Fur [7]; Spirit Form (Visible +0%, –40% no poltergeist effect or possession, –10% can't communicate telepathically, –5% can't ride in vehicles) [45]; Fangs [10]

Disadvantages: Appearance: Horrific [–30]; Bestial [–15]; Dependency (blood, occasional, weekly) [–30]; Dread (bright light) [–30]; Weakness (1d/minute from bright light) [–60]

Skill: Stealth at DX+2 [8]

Inherent Spells: Planeshift (Yetzirah); Planeshift (Assiah) [80]

9.2.8 Numina

The Latin word *numen* has become the general Cabalistic term for any lesser spirit. Most non-directed wraiths, haunts, minor nature spirits, genii loci, and object-spirits fall into the category of numina. These spirits usually have Wills below 14 or 15, roughly human levels of Fatigue, and correspondingly limited fields of action or powers. However, even the trivial numen of a billboard can remember the face of someone who looked at it, or inspire a sudden desire for cigarettes.

9.2.9 Yithoghu

Seemingly unholy blends of cephalopod and human, the yithoghu are composed of psionically–solidified ectoplasm. Whether their bodily forms and integrity arise from their own biology or are the projections of some inhuman brain somewhere in the Astral Realm remains unknown, although the yithoghu themselves, staunch materialists, hold the previous theory. They hunt unwary or weak travelers in the astral plane, taking them as slaves and as sources of will–force, upon which they feed. Yithoghu morality does not recognize any beings save the yithoghu themselves as worthy of consideration, and within yithoghu society it recognizes only force or skill. Their Polished Citadel lies at the center of their predations, and holds generations of hideously mutated and deformed slaves bred to produce psionic essences for their masters' consumption. Yithoghu also seek out magic items to make up for their racial inability to use magic, and valuable artifacts and secrets for their sages to study. Yithoghu slavers compete with Atlantean traders for much of the same cargo, and parties of yithoghu will attack Atlanteans without warning.

Attribute Modifiers: DX +2 [20]; IQ +4 [45]; HT +2 [20]

Advantages: Extra Arms (facial tentacles, no attack) [20]; Magic Resistance +10 [20]; Strong Will +2 [8]; Psychic Vampirism Power 20 (Steal Energy only) [40] and Steal Energy at IQ [4]; Psychokinesis Power 10 (Telekinesis only) [40] and Telekinesis at IQ [4]; Telepathy Power 20 [100]

Disadvantages: Astral Entity [–25]; Dependence (Stolen energy, common, daily) [–15]; Intolerance [–10]; Monstrous

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Appearance [-25]; No Sense of Humor [-10]; Reputation -3 (implacable, sadistic, slavers) [-15]; Sadism [-15]; Self-Centered [-10]; Solipsist [-10]

9.3 Lords of Briah

Most of the entities that make Briah home will take on familiar shapes: either human forms, or those of archetypally familiar beasts such as eagles, dragons, lions, etc. Their behavior and demeanor brush the stereotypical and unmistakable, although the motivation or intent of a Briatic lord may be unclear. (It's very hard to read the body language of a winged man with a lion head.) The Iconic Realm does not make subtlety easy — except for the iconic subtlety of the snake, or of Loki.

9.3.1 Aethyrs

These entities are the true gods of the Hermetic world view. They have complete control over the energies they personify; in their realm their lightest whim is iron natural law. They cannot, of course, interfere with their own abilities — they are not omnipotent outside the decans that give them existence and meaning. Aethyrs will have Wills above 50, and are able to draw on near-infinite levels of Fatigue within their own domains.

9.3.2 Eikones

Eikones (cognate with the word "icons") are spirits that personify some important or well-known concept, location, or thing. Eikones usually have Wills between 14 and 30, tens or hundreds of points of Fatigue, and impressive abilities within their sphere of control or influence. Their difference from numina is mainly one of degree, although as a general rule most numina dwell on Yetzirah while eikones and gods inhabit Briah. Traditional Cabalists consider entities such as the Muses, family spirits such as the Roman Lares, the daimones of ancient worthies, the "throne spirits" of various nations, and the lesser angels and demigods to be eikones. Most demons (p. 00) are technically eikones, except that they originate in the Abyss rather than in Briah proper. More postmodern magi add such figures as Paul Bunyan, Cap'n Crunch, John Bull, Spiderman, or Elvis to the roster, and report roughly equivalent degrees of success in divinations and summonings. This may be more evidence for the common belief that with enough attention (summonings, public belief, worship), lesser numina can ascend to eikonic status. At the other end of the scale, the line between eikones and gods presents an equally murky question. The voudun loa or candomblé orixa behave more like eikones in day-to-day existence, but have many millions more worshipers (and in some cases, more raw power) than the Olympian or Egyptian gods, who jealously cling to their deific status.

9.3.3 Gods

As Cabalists understand things, sufficiently powerful eikones (or the eidolons of immensely powerful beings such as the ineffable Presence within Atziluth) become gods. Not all gods seek out worshipers; the four Archangels, for instance, actively reject such roles, claiming only to be intercessors for the Godhead within Atziluth. Virtually all the deities or deified spirits of the known world still exist within Briah; many of them continue to interact with worshippers, if only to gain extra Fatigue.

The fraught nature of overlapping deity remains unclarified. To what extent are Poseidon Hippios (Poseidon

Horse–Maker) and Poseidon Enosichthon (Poseidon Earth–Shaker) the "same god" as Poseidon Gaieochus (Poseidon Earth–Embracer), the "traditional" Lord of the Sea? Is Poseidon Hippios "actually" a pre–Doric horse–god of the Thessalians? Are all three of these aspects of Poseidon avatars of the same entity, and is Poseidon actually the same god as Neptune? Is he the same as Njord, the Norse sea–god? Cabalists have encountered all manner of Poseidons, and a similarly dizzying variety of other deities. Some theopathologists suspect all of the gods (or at least all of the ones visible in Briah) to be nothing more than eidolons of the various Aethyrs; in this theory, the various Poseidons and Neptunes and so forth are all shadows of Muumiah, the Aethyr of Elemental Water. Interaction between Muumiah and other Aethyrs, or between their decans, may have "calved off" the "non–watery" aspects of Poseidon from the central "sea–god" concept. This theory, however, has at least as many historical and empirical holes as it does theological and philosophical ones. For now, Cabalists (and other tourists in Briah) step gingerly around anything that claims divinity — gods are notorious for their poor sense of humor and lack of perspective about such matters.

9.3.4 Ultraterrestrials

Ultraterrestrials are relatively weak eikones who repeatedly visit the Material Realm; their purposes vary but seem primarily mischievous or outright malign to most of the mortals who encounter them. Although their natural form (to the extent that they have one) is a ball or disc of light, they often take human form, even in their own planes. Thus, they tend to congregate in the more solid and tangible regions of the outer Iconic Realms. The fae (one of the most common varieties of ultraterrestrial) actually patterned much of their society after human cultures, and even interbred with humans. This increased "closeness" may be why Fa'rie remains "one level down" from the Iconic Realm, in Yetzirah. Such "extra humanity" may also be why ultraterrestrials can seldom be blocked by normal spirit barriers such as Pentagram or Astral Block.

The shapes and types of ultraterrestrials run the gamut from tiny winged pixies to 900–foot tall glowing demigods. Some ultraterrestrials closely resemble other supernatural creatures, especially insectile qliphoth or serpent–lords. Most ultraterrestrials, however, take on essentially human form, and the most common types of those include the following:

Slight, androgynous humanoids: From yellowish to greenish or grayish in complexion, these beings sometimes have large, liquid eyes resembling those of human infants.

Pale, beautiful humans with golden hair: These ultraterrestrials often impersonate gods, angels, or similarly elevated figures while on Earth. They also make up the ruling Sidhe caste of the fae.

Small, bearded humanoids: These entities often have malformed or webbed feet, as well as thick, bushy beards and seemingly "aged" faces.

Giant humanoids: Often in armor or exotic garb; giant ultraterrestrials in contact with sasquatch sometimes materialize with thick coats of hair instead.

Despite these differences, ultraterrestrials have many common traits. Ultraterrestrials who deal with humanity tend to "imprint" on human beliefs and concerns — the fae developed courtly love and hunting ballads, while the Greys and other "aliens" issue sonorous warnings about the environment or the dangers of nuclear war. This may be an effect of their common telepathic abilities; ultraterrestrials can usually speak human languages, albeit sometimes with unusual diction or imagery. Ultraterrestrials are capricious, seemingly obeying laws of drama or poetry rather than following any

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actual, practical aim. Ultraterrestrials in general show great interest in sex with humans, although their notion of sex may involve fairly unpleasant abuses both physical and mental. They seem to have a distorting effect on time; both fae brides and alien abductees report anomalous "missing" or accelerated time senses. Ultraterrestrials seem to flock around individuals or families; a clan might have a long history of dealings with the fae just as a person or family may experience repeated "alien abductions" or "UFO sightings." An Ultraterrestrial almost never reveals his True Name, possibly out of a well-justified fear of the consequences. Those few mortals who can reliably summon them do so either by means of a blood connection or some enchanted object (often a whistle, a hollow stone, an implant, or a remote control). Ultraterrestrials are fond of physical accessories such as staffs or rods, and many "travel" in vehicles ranging from swan chariots to glowing airships. Ultraterrestrials usually create such artifacts out of ectoplasm or by stitching together common trash; when they depart their gold turns to leaves, or their "saucer plating" to tinfoil and balsa wood.

Advantages: Spirit Form (Physical Form +80%, Unlimited Lifespan, +30%, can't use possession -20%) [190]

Disadvantages: Curious [-5]; Hidebound [-5]; Lecherousness [-15]; Solipsist [-10]; Vow (always hold to letter of promises) [-15], and usually at least -25 points from a Dread, Vulnerability, or Compulsive Behavior.

Ultraterrestrials will always have an Appearance of at least Ugly or Handsome; no ultraterrestrial looks "plain."

9.4 Things From The Abyss

Beings from the Abyss that manifest in Assiah without an anchor spend *ten times* the fatigue that other spirits do for any type of materialization. For demons, the anchor is a sigil, usually inscribed within a pentagram. The stronger, larger, and more permanent the sigil, the easier it becomes for demons to materialize within it; in the past, powerful enchantments have created actual gates between the Material World and the Abyss. These allow actual passage: rather than requiring materialization at all, they transform the demons from ectoplasm to matter. The last such gateway, which emerged on the rim of Krakatoa Island in 1881, took Erasmus Rooke, ninety other Cabalists (including three other Grand Masters), the last flask of alkahest left on Earth, and four Words of Power to close, and they had to demolish the island to do it. The Cabal frowns on demonic gateway creation.

9.4.1 Demons

Demons, spirits who refuse to accept the rule of the Archangels and 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 on 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. 00) 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 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]

* Demons resist these spells *automatically*. This is a modification of Invulnerability (p, CI59).

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 like Bloodlust, Lecherous, Sadism, Self-Centered, etc.

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].

Template Cost: 300 points

9.4.2 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 Upon the Threshold possesses all the same powers, spells, and skills that the traveler does; 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 on the Threshold. The GM should individually craft the Dweller to reflect the worst aspects of the seeker's personality, history, and nature.

9.4.3 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. (Possibly the "echo effect" from this first, Aborted Creation wrecked Lemuria and Atlantis, and causes the "reality quakes" mentioned on p. 00.)

Now, the fragments of this diseased, broken, toxic energy seek to regain their place in Creation, remaking it in their own stunted image. A qlippothic fragment 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 large enough (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 psionics.

Qlippothic swarms break down if their 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 fatigue

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and strength 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 qliploth has a favored form, usually similar to an earthly creature of ill nature or ill reputation. Many qliploth entities have some measure of control over their earthly analogue creatures. The pig-qliploth, the Molobrians (p. 00, above), have already crossed over and gained a permanent foothold in Assiah; isolated colonies of other qliploth may exist in the cracks and interstices of reality. The Adze (p. BT83) may be a qliploth entity of a divergent nature.

9.4.3.1 Qliploth Templates

The following template covers all currently-encountered qliploth beings. Specific breeds of qliploth diverge as given with each writeup.

Advantages: Cast Iron Stomach [15]; Decreased Life Support [10]; Immunity to Disease [10]; Immunity to Poison [15]

Disadvantages: Appearance: Horrific [-30]; Dependency: Human misery (Common, daily) [-15]; Dependency: Mana (Infrequent, daily) [-60]; Odious Racial Habit (eats humans) [-15]; Poverty (Dead Broke) [-25]; Sadism [-15]

9.4.3.2 Adimirim (Leech Qliploth)

These hideous things simply swell up like balloons as they feed and strengthen, rather than flow together in clumps. When an Adimur becomes human-sized (after consuming about 100 pints of blood), it sprouts tendrils to serve as clumsy, shuffling limbs. Its diseased, screw-shaped mouth irises open on cartilage, but seldom matches the proportions of its taut, rubbery "head."

9.4.3.3 Sartarim (Cockroach Qliploth)

These creatures resemble large (thumb-sized) cockroaches of a particularly greasy sheen; their mandibles make an audible hissing noise. Sartarim carapaces interlock to form giant cockroaches that scatter apart if threatened. Some Sartarim swarms can construct humanoid bodies that pass cursory inspection — in bad light, and in a long coat and wide-brimmed hat.

Attribute Modifiers: ST -5 [-40]; IQ -5 [-40]; HT +2 [20]

Advantages: Body of Swarm (Humanoid form, insect bodies) [108]; Claws (only in humanoid form) [13]; Clinging [25]; Pestilence (usually typhus or dysentery) [5]

Disadvantages: Disturbing Voice (hissing) [-10]

Knacks: Insect Control (Cockroach) [6]

These stats are for a beginning, small sartarim swarm of about human mass (4 hexes). IQ should increase roughly by one point every time the mass of the sartarim doubles. An extra 12 Hit Points should be bought every time the swarm increases by one hex in size.

9.4.3.4 Tzaphirim (Rat Qlippoth)

Although they closely resemble (and can interbreed with) the brown Norway rat, the Tzaphirim can climb sheer walls, walk on ceilings, and chew through steel. At full extension their jaws open up along half their body length, full of chisel-sharp, plague-carrying teeth. (Unlike a true rat swarm, a tzaphirim swarm does cutting damage.) Tzaphirim seldom bother taking human form, although Cabalists fighting the Algiers Infestation in 1599 reported some individuals up to five feet tall on hind legs, using swords.

Attribute Modifiers: ST -1 [-10]; DX +3 [30]; IQ -5 [-40]; HT +2 [20]

Advantages: Acute Taste and Smell +4 [8]; Alertness +4 [20]; Clinging [25]; Faz Sense (3-hex range, -20%) [8]; Mindshare (Global Consciousness, Maintenance drone, 1 mile range) [55]; Night Vision [10]; Peripheral Vision [15]; Pestilence (plague) [5]; Sharp Teeth [5]; Thick Fur [28]

Disadvantages: Color-Blindness [-10]; Gregarious [-10]; Mute [-25]; No Depth Perception [-10]; Poor Grip [-5]

Knacks: Mammal Control (Rat) [12]

These stats are for a single Algiers Tzaphur, grown to human size. For each additional human mass, IQ should increase by one point.

9.4.3.5 Zevuvirim (Fly Qlippoth)

Blowflies, green flies, biting flies, houseflies, all of them serve as the template for the Zevuvirim, which can seem like any type of fly of any size from gnat to crow. Only the human lips beneath the mandibles, and occasionally the image of a red face on the wings, distinguish one of the Zevuvirim from its muscoid kin. A fully aware swarm of Zevuvirim can modulate their buzzing to create any number of effects: hypnotic illusion or trance, rattling windows loose, speech, even the static suspension of a hooded coat in the air around a thick swarm to give the semblance of humanity.

Attribute Modifiers: ST -5 [-40]; IQ -5 [-40]; HT +2 [20]

Advantages: Body of Swarm (Insect bodies) [78]; Flight [40]; Pestilence (usually typhus or dysentery) [5]

Disadvantages: Disturbing Voice (buzzing) [-10]; Incompetence: Stealth (continuous buzzing) [-1]

Knacks: Insect Control (Fly) [6]; Apportation [18]; Daze [8]; Illusion Disguise [6]

These stats are for a beginning, small zevuvirim swarm of about human mass (4 hexes). IQ should increase roughly by one point every time the mass of the zevuvirim doubles. An extra 12 Hit Points should be bought every time the swarm increases by one hex in size.

10 Glossary

Abyss: The repository and container for the negative space of the universe; it separates Atziluth (q.v.), the Godhead, from the outer Realms. May or may not be Hell.

Aethyr: The personification, and hence the ruler, of one of the 36 magical decans (q.v.).

Archangels: In technical angelology; the second–lowest order of angel. To the Cabal, the term refers to the four entities who mediate and interpret the powers of Creation. Each Archangel also embodies one of the four elements.

Assiah: The Material Realm; Earth and the physical universe reachable from it.

Atziluth: The Spiritual Realm, dwelling place of the Godhead, the Prime Mover. May or may not be Heaven.

Avatar: The material incarnation of a higher spiritual being such as a god or bodhisattva; in Cabalistic parlance, a sentient, material eidolon (q.v.).

Briah: The Iconic Realm, the realm of gods and Aethyrs who shape and reflect the world symbolically.

Cabalist: A member of the Cabal, who may or may not be a kabbalist (q.v.).

College: A classification of magic; a collection of magical spells and concepts linked by a common effect, flavor, or nature. The Cabal has determined that each decan (q.v.) provides the essential energy and identity of one college; there are 23 colleges currently known.

Daimon: The Greek equivalent of the Roman *genius*, (q.v.) used by Cabalists to refer to the spirit personifying the characteristic skill, luck, or nature of a great person.

Decan: One of the 36 "frequencies" on which the universe resonates; one of the 36 "elements" or "flavors" of existence, and hence of magic. Each decan is governed by an Aethyr (q.v.). For individual decans, see the *Decan Reference Table*, on p. 00. In astrological terms, ten degrees of arc (one–third) of a sign of the zodiac.

Deluge: The destruction of the First Creation. The Biblical Flood in the Bible represents one of mankind's memories of this destruction, or of its effects on the Material Realm.

Demon: A being that has rejected the current Creation and the rule of the Archangels as interpreters of Atziluth; many demons have rejected Atziluth itself.

Ectoplasm: In Victorian spiritualism, the substance from which ghosts form. Erasmus Rooke's works have made it the default Cabalistic term for the quasi–matter making up spirits and the Inner Realms in general.

Egregor: A magical after–image of a spell, left imprinted on the ectoplasmic fabric of Yetzirah.

Eidolon: A shadow of a more powerful being.

10 Glossary

Eikone: A more powerful spirit, between a numen and a god; the personification of some powerful force, concept, or thing.

Elemental: A creature composed entirely of one of the four elements.

Exoteric: Openly available to outsiders; the opposite of "esoteric."

Fae: The ultraterrestrial (q.v.) race most commonly encountered in northern and western Europe between about 800 B.C. and 1200 A.D. Also known as "fairies," or "elves."

Fa'rie: The land of the fae (q.v.), currently separated from Assiah (q.v.) by order of its King, Oberon.

Genius: The characteristic spirit of anything, cognate not only with our word for anomalous intellect ("a genius for war") but with the Arabic *djinn*. The *genius loci* is literally "the spirit of a place."

Hermetic: Referring to Hermes Trismegistos, or to the magical science revealed by him and developed by his intellectual heirs.

Hinnom, Vale of:

Inner Realms: Shorthand for Yetzirah and Briah, which lie between Assiah and Atziluth.

Ka: To the ancient Egyptians, that portion of the soul that strove for nobility and transcendence. To the Cabal, a magical or psionic projection of a resident of Assiah (q.v.) into the Inner Realms, which technically more closely resembles the ancient Egyptian *sah*. When the Cabal adopted its nomenclature during the Renaissance, not even the Egyptians remembered the fine details of their ancient religion.

Kabbalist: A practitioner of mystical (and occasionally magical) Judaism; not to be confused with a Cabalist (q.v.).

Numen (pl. Numina): A minor spirit.

Parhedros: The daimon (q.v.) of a living person, the equivalent of the vodoun *gros bon ange* or the Egyptian *khaibit*.

Passer: The Cabalist who an ultor (q.v.) is sworn to aid and avenge.

Plane: A generic term for any place, dimension, or location sharing the same physical laws and defined boundaries. Used without rigor.

Qlippoth: The discarded remnants of the First Creation, now formed into hideous unlife trying to taint the universe to match themselves.

Realm: One of the four stages of reality — Material (Assiah), Astral (Yetzirah), Iconic (Briah), and Spiritual (Atziluth). Each Realm exhibits roughly constant magical and physical laws.

Sephirah (pl. Sephiroth): From the Hebrew for "sphere," a state of being and existence somehow tangent to the Realms and other planes.

Sphere: Another general term, usually referring to either a planetary plane or a sephirah.

Ultor: A Cabalist whose duty is to aid and avenge a specific Cabalist (the passer, q.v.) attacked by an outside force. Each Cabalist has two ultors, and serves as an ultor to two Cabalists.

Ultraterrestrial: A very weak eikone, vulnerable to human imprinting and of a mischievous tendency. A possible link between man and spirit.

Yetzirah: The Astral Realm, the realm of spirits.

Yithoghu: A much-hated and feared race of psionic creatures dwelling in Yetzirah.

