

GURPS

Fourth Edition

*Locations: Hellsgate*TM



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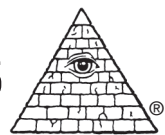
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Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the **GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition**. Page references that begin with B refer to that book, not this one.

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INTRODUCTION

Centuries ago, a volcanic eruption in an all-but-uninhabited patch of desert brought up something more than smoke and lava. When the clouds of ash settled, the center of the volcano was occupied by the rudiments of a new city . . . one of an unsavory character. This was Hellsgate, a city ruled by demons – refugees from underworld wars. Too far from civilization to be challenged, it grew into a center of magical trade and a destination for cultists and desperate travelers alike.

Hellsgate is a mid-sized city in a place where no city has business being. It can support little permanent immigration, but most of its inhabitants are effectively immortal and unable to leave. The city is full of magic, but it's magic with a dark tinge to it. Despite existing in the mortal world, it is imbued with the essence of the underworld, and the demons and souls of the dead who make up the majority of the population live there as though it were the afterlife.

Depending on one's perspective, the city is either "free" or "lawless." Its rulers place few restrictions on inhabitants and welcome newcomers, who are usually desperate and therefore easily corrupted and exploited. However, they make a brutal game of justice, punishing anyone on a whim. For permanent residents, Hellsgate is either a prison or respite from the wars of Hell. For visitors, it is equal parts desire and danger.

GURPS Locations: Hellsgate presents a complete description of the city and its inhabitants, including new racial templates for the demons and lost souls, and full character sheets for important and colorful NPCs. It is suitable for use in any fantasy game that could benefit from a little piece of Hell on Earth. Adventurers can stumble across Hellsgate on their travels or visit it intentionally to acquire forbidden items or lore. Though it may qualify as the most evil city in the world by some standards, it's stable and open enough for a group to visit and explore . . . though at considerable risk.

So is Hellsgate an opportunity for the daring or a stain on the world? Subtle foe or friend to be kept at arm's length? That's up to you.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Matt Riggsby is trained in anthropology and archaeology but now works for the medical division of a large corporation. In his spare time, he lives as a recluse in a house built generations ago, with his wife, son, and several friendly but not very bright dogs.

Hellsgate Stats

Population: 76,000 (Search +2)

Physical and Magical Environment

Terrain: Desert

Appearance: Ugly (-2)

Hygiene: -1

High Mana (Common Enchantment)

Culture and Economy

Language: Demontongue

Literacy: Accented

TL: 4

Wealth: Comfortable (×2)

Status: -1 to 3

Political Environment

Government: Dictatorship

CR: 2 (Corruption -1)

Military Resources: \$1.216M

Defense Bonus: +9

Notes

Search modifier is +3 for any kind of esoteric knowledge, and +4 for anything related to demons (e.g., demonic lore or diabolical artifacts). Many areas of the city have aspected mana. The entire city is low sanctity, with some areas of no sanctity.

Using GURPS Mass Combat

Due to the city's unusual population (*Residents*, p. 6), the city is remarkably defensible. During a siege (only), divide the number of demons and lost souls by 20, instead of 50, to determine how many elements may be pressed into service. Use the standard rules for mortal residents.

Lost souls are Medium Infantry with mostly Basic equipment and Inferior quality (though some are better); their casualties may be replaced at 10 times the normal rate. Most demons should be treated as Super-Soldiers, with a minimum of Good equipment and Good quality. Some of the larger, more powerful demons are instead the equivalent of Ogres, Giants, and (in one or two cases) Giant Monsters.

Reviewers: Michele Armellini and Roger Burton West

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Fashions are likewise varied. Most demons and the more monstrous residents of the city rarely wear anything, and when they do, it's usually jewelry or belts and straps to hold equipment. For comfort and availability, mortals and lost souls often fall back on clothing suitable to the region. What passes for native costume consists of either a robe or baggy pants and shirt or vest, a broad sash, and a head cloth worn as a keffiyeh or small turban. Because of the rough and sometimes searing hot ground, unusually heavy footwear is worn at all times. Even relatively lightweight sandals and slippers have soles made of several layers of leather or solid wood. Fine boots are particularly prized.

AMUSEMENTS AND SPECTACLES

For such a naturally grim place, Hellsgate features a surprising number of ways to have a good time, though few would be regarded as good, clean fun. The city has more than its share of taverns, which serve a dizzying array of drinks. A number of them specialize in providing a particular type of

alcohol or reproducing a particular society's variety of public house. Taverns are also a center for the city's few performing artists – primarily storytellers, dancers, and musicians. Although some occasionally stage small plays, Hellsgate doesn't have a significant tradition of theater. Public houses providing more potent intoxicants (lotus, opium, and the like) are fairly common, as are brothels. Indeed, in many taverns, the companionship of the staff is also on sale.

Gambling is a popular amusement, with games from all over the world, ranging in time from modern to ancient. New games and variations on existing games are popular. Lost souls and demons alike are avid players of a complex chess-like game involving dozens of pieces and a board which can change shape during play. Lost souls, for whom no wound is permanent, have an active dueling culture – providing yet another thing for gamblers to wager on. The better duelists are often veterans of the Perpetual Arena. Lost souls are disinclined to fight mortals, but will do so with those who absolutely insist.

Public spectacles are generally produced by demons and feared by other residents. For the demons, sport, arts, and pageantry involve someone being hurt, which leads to them organizing such events as concerts of music consisting of tuned screams; spectacular demonstrations of punishments for wrongdoers; and football-like games in spaces strewn with caltrops, shards of obsidian, and other hazards. Such events inevitably attract large crowds; lost souls are compelled to attend, some mortals are drawn out of a sense of morbid curiosity, and demons and many monstrous residents actively enjoy them.

LIFE OF THE MIND

The vast majority of residents have no offspring to educate. Nearly 3% of lost souls are technically those of children (up to age 16), but their situation bears little resemblance to that of mortal minors. Thus, Hellsgate has no universities or other formal centers of learning, and professional teachers are few and far between. However, many lost souls pursue the consolations of philosophy. There's a great deal of intellectual discussion, leaning heavily on legal and moral philosophy. Collectively, the lost souls own a remarkably diverse range of intellectual texts imported from across the world. Some know and have attempted to reproduce fragments of lost works, though not necessarily successfully.

Since Hellsgate is a center of trade in magical items and substances, it has a higher than usual proportion of magicians as residents, and even more as visitors. There is no magicians' guild, but there are several small, informal organizations of magicians, alchemists, and other magical professionals.

A number of more powerful demons are known to have their own libraries, consisting mainly of demonic lore. The demons only discuss these matters among themselves, however, not with outsiders. The libraries themselves are fabulously valuable, but well-protected, and their contents are themselves sometimes hazardous to touch or to read (*Dangerous Books*, above).

Dangerous Books

Knowledge comes at a price, particularly in Hellsgate. Many demons own books which can protect themselves against unauthorized readers. Any one (but only one) of these modifiers may be applied to a book or an entire library. Doing so halves the cost (-0.5 CF), but does not affect weight. See *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 4* and *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 8* for more on books, and *GURPS Low-Tech Companion 1* for more on libraries.

Corrosive: The book is damaging to the touch. A corrosive book does one point of corrosion damage to the hands per hour of reading. Flimsy gloves (DR 0) are destroyed after the first hour; armored gloves (DR 1+) last longer, but every five hours of reading reduces their effective DR by 1. Readers usually keep the books in heavy cases lined with non-corroding glazed tiles. Such a case weighs twice as much as the book it contains and costs \$10 per lb.

Maddening: The book is disturbing beyond its subject material. It has illuminated capitals which subtly project horrifying images, and the words whisper uncannily into the reader's ear. Anyone reading the book must make a Will roll at +2 at the end of the day; this roll is at -2 for every full hour spent reading. On a success or critical success, nothing happens. Failure means his dreams were tainted, and he spends the next day afflicted with a -10-point disadvantage (or combination of disadvantages) chosen by the GM. Critical failure makes this -20 points! Phantom Voices and Phobias are common.

Toothed: The book doesn't want to be read, and may bite. Once per hour of reading, the book will slam shut. If the reader fails a Dodge roll, his hand is caught for 1d-1 crushing damage. A few books have sharper but lighter teeth and do 1d-3 cutting damage instead. Cautious readers wear gauntlets, put weights (at least 5x as much as the book weighs) on the open book, or attach heavy clamps to their reading tables, to prevent this.

SISTER FA ZIN TSU

68 points

Sister Fa is either the most devoted or the most foolish missionary in history. She came to Hellsgate 15 years ago to minister to the living and the lost souls (and, if they were interested, even the demons). She was allowed to stay in the city on the condition that she never perform any religious ceremonies, pray, or even mention any deities. Sister Fa does her best to comply, but does make the occasional error. She's under near-constant surveillance, so when she does slip up, she's almost immediately dragged off for several days of torture and then set free again. (Her soul is too pure for the demons to torture her *directly*, but they have little difficulty finding a non-demon willing to do the dirty work.) While Sister Fa sees this as just another challenge, the demons see it as a tremendously amusing joke, and they are very clever at arranging circumstances which will cause her to make more mistakes.

ST 10 [0]; **DX** 10 [0]; **IQ** 12 [40]; **HT** 10 [0].
Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 15 [15]; Per 12 [0];
FP 10 [0].
Basic Speed 5.00 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0]; Dodge 8.
5'3"; 130 lbs.

Social Background

TL: 3 [0].

CF: Human Lands [0].

Languages: Common Tongue (Native) [0]; Demontongue (Broken) [2].

Advantages

Blessed [10]; Clerical Investment [5]; Fearlessness 4 [8]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Magic Resistance 3 [6]; Rapid Healing [5]; Voice [10].

Perks: Honest Face. [1]

Disadvantages

Charitable (12) [-15]; Chummy [-5]; Disciplines of Faith (Asceticism) [-15]; Honesty (12) [-10]; Stubbornness [-5]; Vow (Minister to those who need it, no matter the risk to myself) [-15]; Wealth (Poor) [-15].

Quirks: Stutters a bit when emotional; Thinks cats have a "touch of demon" in them. [-2]

Skills

Area Knowledge (Hellsgate) (E) IQ+1 [2]-13; Current Affairs (Hellsgate) (E) IQ [1]-12; Diplomacy (H) IQ+1 [2]-13*; Exorcism (H) Will [4]-15; First Aid (E) IQ+1 [2]-13; Housekeeping (E) IQ [1]-12; Literature (H) IQ-1 [2]-11; Meditation (H) Will-1 [2]-14; Public Speaking (A) IQ+1 [1]-13; Religious Ritual (GM's choice) (H) IQ [4]-12; Riding (Horse) (A) DX [2]-10; Singing (E) HT+2 [1]-12*; Teaching (A) IQ [2]-12; Theology (GM's choice) (H) IQ+2 [12]-14.

* Includes +2 for Voice.

THE LATE ELEWA IBN ZURI

450 points

Elewa is one of Hellsgate's older vampires. He is surprisingly undiplomatic, though "undiplomatic" for a vampire can still be

"mindbogglingly subtle" for many mortals. However, he realizes this and survives by keeping himself out of potential conflicts. He oversees several adjacent towers well away from Shadow Street, ruling the resident ghouls and humans (most of whom are distant descendants) autocratically. He leaves this domain no more than once or twice a month. Elewa's is known for being fairly neutral in other people's disputes, so he is frequently appealed to as a judge in complex disputes – when individuals are inclined to settle matters peacefully. However, his services don't come cheap, especially if he's asked to use Oath (*GURPS Magic*, p. 138) to bind others to his rulings. Elewa could act as a 10-point Patron.

The following statistics assume that Elewa uses the vampire template from p. B262. See the introduction to *Colorful Characters* (p. 22) for details on changing this.

ST 16 [0]*; **DX** 11 [20]; **IQ** 15 [100]; **HT** 13 [30].
Damage 1d+1/2d+2; BL 51 lbs.; HP 20 [0]*; Will 15 [0]; Per 18 [0]*; FP 16 [9].
Basic Speed 6.00 [0]; Basic Move 7 [5]; Dodge 9.
5'10"; 160 lbs.

Social Background

TL: 3 [0].

CF: Hell [1]; Human Lands [0].

Languages: Common Tongue (Native) [0]; Demontongue (Native) [6]; two others at Accented (GM's choice) [8].

Advantages

Contact Group (Former clients; Hellsgate general knowledge-15; 9 or less; Somewhat Reliable) [10]; Danger Sense [15]; Empathy [15]; Intuition [15]; Magery 2 [25]; Reputation +2 (Fair and reliable; Hellsgate citizens; Always) [5]; Social Chameleon [5]; Spirit Empathy [15]; Vampire [150]; Wealth (Comfortable) [10].

Disadvantages

Code of Honor (Always honor a sworn oath; provide impartial service to clients; never accept a bribe) [-5]; Colorblindness [-10]; Cowardice (12) [-10]; Laziness [-10].

Quirks: Prefers to be bluntly truthful with people; Won't break the law unless absolutely necessary. [-2]

Skills

Acting (A) IQ [2]-15; Area Knowledge (Hellsgate) (E) IQ+1 [2]-16; Body Language (A) Per-1 [1]-17; Current Affairs (Hellsgate) (E) IQ+1 [2]-16; Detect Lies (H) Per+2 [2]-20*; Diplomacy (H) IQ [4]-15; Law (Contract) (H) IQ-1 [2]-14; Law (Hellsgate) (H) IQ-1 [2]-14; Literature (H) IQ-2 [1]-13; Merchant (A) IQ-1 [1]-14; Observation (A) Per-1 [1]-17; Occultism (A) IQ-1 [1]-14; Performance (A) IQ-1 [1]-14; Politics (A) IQ [2]-15; Psychology (H) IQ-1 [2]-14; Running (A) HT [2]-13; Savoir-Faire (High Society) (E) IQ [1]-15; Thaumatology (VH) IQ-1 [1]-14†; Urban Survival (A) Per-1 [1]-17; Wrestling (A) DX+1 [4]-12.

Spells†

Bravery (H) IQ [1]-15; Emotion Control (H) IQ [1]-15; Fear (H) IQ [1]-15; Keen Hearing (H) IQ [1]-15; Lend Energy (H) IQ [1]-15; Loyalty (H) IQ [1]-15; Oath (H) IQ [1]-15; Recovery Energy (H) IQ [1]-15.

* Includes +3 for Empathy.

† Thaumatology and all spells include +2 for Magery.

CHAPTER FOUR

CAMPAIGNS

Hellsgate may be an interesting place, but what can you do with the (quite literally) damned thing? Here are some ideas.

USING HELLSGATE

Hellsgate can be fit into a wide range of fantasy campaigns with little work. It's a long way from anything important and it's not an expanding power, so it can be tucked away in any remote corner of the map without having a profound impact on the setting as a whole. In a low-magic setting, low mana levels may mean that most of its agents and products are significantly less effective outside of the city itself, while in a high-magic campaign, it may be just one more large-scale producer of magical goods and evil plots among many.

The GM does not have to make Hellsgate the focus of a campaign. It can exist on the periphery of awareness, as a far-off center of subtle but disruptive activity. Demonic agents might travel to the PCs' home area to infiltrate and corrupt local organizations. Local evil cultists and necromancers may use supplies and advice originating from Hellsgate. It may even be the source of the occasional demonic army.

However, the city is most interesting when adventurers actually *go* there! Travelers may infiltrate the city, whether to gather information or to track down and stop specific enemies. Those with purely material interests can find a wide range of utilitarian goods there. Scholars and magicians can find vast stores of arcane knowledge, although the people with that knowledge may be unwilling to part with it without attaching conditions. While merchants and philosophers engage in their trades, caravan guards and other traveling companions can do a bit of their own shopping – and try to protect their masters in a city where the authorities shrug at most crimes and chuckle at the most horrible ones.

GURPS *Dungeon Fantasy*

There are a couple of ways to work Hellsgate into a *Dungeon Fantasy* campaign. One is to treat the whole place as one big dungeon. It's full of demons, monsters, and lost souls (some of whom have a few centuries of fighting practice behind them). And since the town is fabulously wealthy, there's lots of loot to be gained. Adventurers need to be stealthy, trying to work undetected so they don't bring the whole city down on their heads.

Hellsgate can also serve as a combined dungeon and town. The city's a good place to pick up unusual, special-order, and high-powered gear; if it's available for sale anywhere, it's available there. Individual buildings or neighborhoods can then be the object of stealthy adventures. Delvers can raid a cabalist's hive for powerful artifacts or run through Shadow Street (p. 18) to take out a number of vampires. Given the city's casual attitude toward law and order, adventurers can make a

decent living from quick attacks on monstrous neighborhoods. It will get the monsters up in arms, but the demonic authorities may or may not be interested.

In addition to the demonic templates on pp. 19-20, many *Dungeon Fantasy* demons can be found in Hellsgate. Lesser residents of the city include petty demons (*GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 9*, p. 32) and devilkin (*GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 9*, p. 33), though since they're on their home ground, the former don't have a Duty while the latter aren't Fragile. Among the more powerful demons, as-Sharak (*GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 2*, p. 21), peshkali (*GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 2*, p. 25), standard demons (*GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 9*, p. 34), and demons of old (*GURPS Dungeon Fantasy Monsters 1*, p. 10) can be found. Variations, such as the customization notes on p. 34 of *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 9* and the monster prefixes on p. 36 of *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy Monsters 1*, are common. Note that these demons will be more willing to negotiate than their written descriptions suggest, as they are on their home ground.

*May the devil make a
ladder of your backbone
while he's picking
apples in Hell.*

– Irish curse

GURPS *Espionage*

Hellsgate provides a great deal of employment for spies. Foreign interests have placed a number of agents there to try to make some sense out of the cabal's actions and to steal valuable secrets. Demons are known to spy on one another by placing agents in one another's hives. Some interests in the city, notably the undead whose time horizons match those of the demons themselves, keep an eye on the inner workings of the cabal as well. It is suspected by some that Brogogin's ancient enemies may have tendrils extending into the city (figuratively, anyway), but the possibility raises more questions than it answers: If they've known about Hellsgate, why haven't they done anything about it? Just about any adventurer could easily be recruited to snoop around the city, particularly if he's got otherwise legitimate business there.

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... we got into the deep waters of the river Oceanus, where lie the land and city of the Cimmerians who live enshrouded in mist and darkness which the rays of the sun never pierce neither at his rising nor as he goes down again out of the heavens, but the poor wretches live in one long melancholy night.

– Homer, *The Odyssey*

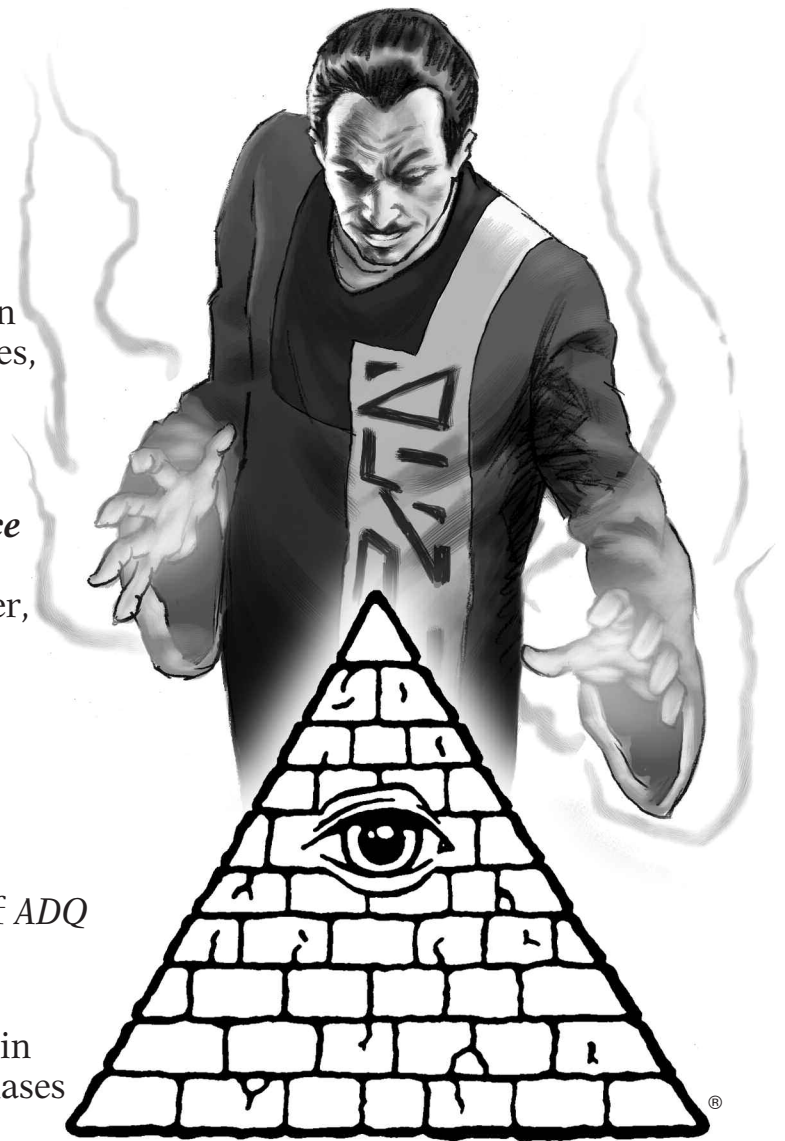
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