

**GURPS**

Fourth Edition

BANESTORM™

# ABYDOS™

*Hidden City, Forbidden Lore*



Written by **DAVID PULVER** Edited by **NIKOLA VRTIS**

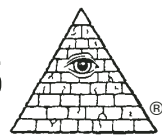
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# INTRODUCTION

## Content Warning

**GURPS Banestorm: Abydos** describes a culture wherein the living interact with the dead in ways that most readers would deem “intimate” and/or “disrespectful,” and thus inappropriate. These elements may offend some readers. Please consider your gaming group’s sensibilities before introducing this material into your campaign.

*Rumors say the darkest city in Megalos lies somewhere near Lake Styx. These tales of a shadowed city of necromancers and zombies are discouraged by the Church. Some who seek it out either vanish or return stating with impressive certainty that it does not exist. The few supposedly reliable texts on the subject have been suppressed . . .*

– **GURPS Banestorm**

**GURPS Banestorm: Abydos** reveals the secrets of Abydos, a legendary city in the north of Megalos. Ruled by Christian mages who believe that raising the dead is the highest

sacrament, its inhabitants are denounced by their neighbors as the foulest of heretics. The city’s very name is often removed from maps and documents lest its infection spread among the faithful!

Abydos may exist as a sinister citadel for heroic adventurers to penetrate. Alternatively, it may be home to a group that uses swords and necromancy to protect their fellow citizens from foreign threats and resident evils, or soldiers in a street-level war for control of the city’s underworld.

Set in Yrth, the world of **GURPS Banestorm**, this sourcebook includes a street-by-street description of the city of Abydos, and extensive details on its unusual society and institutions, including the undead Deathless Monks, a Viking Mafia, and the notorious Flesh Library.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

David L. Pulver is a Canadian freelance writer and game designer based in Victoria, British Columbia. He is the co-author of the **GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition**, and author of **Transhuman Space**, the **GURPS Spaceships** series, *Big Eyes, Small Mouth, 2nd Edition*, and numerous other gaming books.

## About GURPS

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*Errata.* Everyone makes mistakes, including us – but we do our best to fix our errors. Up-to-date errata pages for all **GURPS** releases, including this book, are available on our website – see above.

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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## Hecate Club

The Hecate Club is open to students displaying “strength of character, body, and mind.” Formed five years ago, it is smaller than the other Societies but takes an active role in protecting students from abusers. Members are generally regarded as upstarts by the others and get into many fights with them. The better known club members often have one or both of the other clubs as an Enemy (rival).

## THE FLESH LIBRARY

Nicasia Hall is the library of Saint Magdalene’s. The mundane collection includes many textbooks on magical (especially necromantic) theory, supernatural creatures, the names of demons (“for purposes of banishing them”), and lengthy discussions of the lives and works of numerous famous and infamous mages.

At the core of the library are the grimoires. These contain all widely known spells (GM’s option, but certainly nearly all spells practiced on Yrth), as well as some unique necromantic spells invented at the college. All these works are tattooed upon the bodies of slaves, who are known as “flesh scrolls.”

The custom of flesh scrolls originated after Lady Ravenjoy wished to consult a certain work, only to have found it eaten by mice. The six nuns who were the library’s keepers became the first of the new scrolls, with Lady Ravenjoy graciously donating a large number of her own personal slaves to provide appropriate writing matter for the remainder. Over the centuries, the

librarians have become more fastidious; now only the most physically attractive slaves, male or female, are chosen.

If a flesh scroll dies or is otherwise disfigured, the formula is copied onto another, and the original scroll (live or dead) is cremated. In this way, the librarians ensure all works remain up to date and do not fade with time. If a scroll is lost, master mages in the college consult their personal grimoires and compare notes, to ensure a new scroll is correct.

There are over 1,000 flesh scrolls in the Flesh Library, one for each spell, with three or four dozen kept in each of its 21 rooms and chambers. Each flesh scroll’s wrists are manacled to a bracket in the ceiling, keeping its arms from getting in the way of those who wish to view the writing. A brass collar is also attached, with a catalog number. Scrolls are all under the Suspended Animation spell; that way they do not eat, drink, relieve themselves, or complain.

Scrolls are occasionally awakened when someone wishes to check one out of the library: Rather than lug an unconscious body around, it’s easier for the head librarian to cast an Awaken spell, have the scroll led to a new location, then cast another Suspended Animation spell after the scroll is returned. Because the borrower must properly feed and clean the flesh scroll while it is in his possession, some mages opt to place a Suspend Animation spell on the scroll for the duration of the loan.

Scrolls may be borrowed for up to a week, then they must be returned for renewal. Someone who is late in returning a scroll pays a fine of \$100 per day for another week; after that, the proctors (p. 25) are sent to retrieve it.

## The Life of a Flesh Scroll

The purchase of a flesh scroll is a rare event, occurring when an existing scroll has been lost, disfigured, or killed, or a new spell is developed and must be recorded. If this happens, the head librarian or her assistants visit the slave markets. Only humans and elves are accepted. Youth and beauty are sought after: A scroll might be a lovely peasant girl sold by her debt-ridden parents, or a handsome highwayman enslaved for his crimes.

A new scroll is taken to the library cellar and secured to a table. First, the flesh scroll’s tongue is surgically removed. The procedure is supervised by the head librarian to prevent undue shock or bleeding. Next, each one is cleaned and shaved. Finally, the tattooing process begins, which can take three to five painful days. The artist inscribes the words as they are read by one of the librarian’s assistants. The scroll remains chained, but it may be fed.

When the tattoo is finished, the slave is washed, anointed with scented oils, then led naked from the chamber and up to the Flesh Library. There the scroll experiences the horror of seeing others like himself as he is led to his place and manacled, where the head librarian casts a Suspended Animation spell upon the victim.

A flesh scroll has the disadvantages Mute, Social Stigma (Valuable Property), and Social Status -2 (Slave). The tattoos do not lower the character’s Appearance, since they do not cover the face, hands, or feet.

Many flesh scrolls are centuries old, aging a few hours or days of every year, as someone borrows them. They live

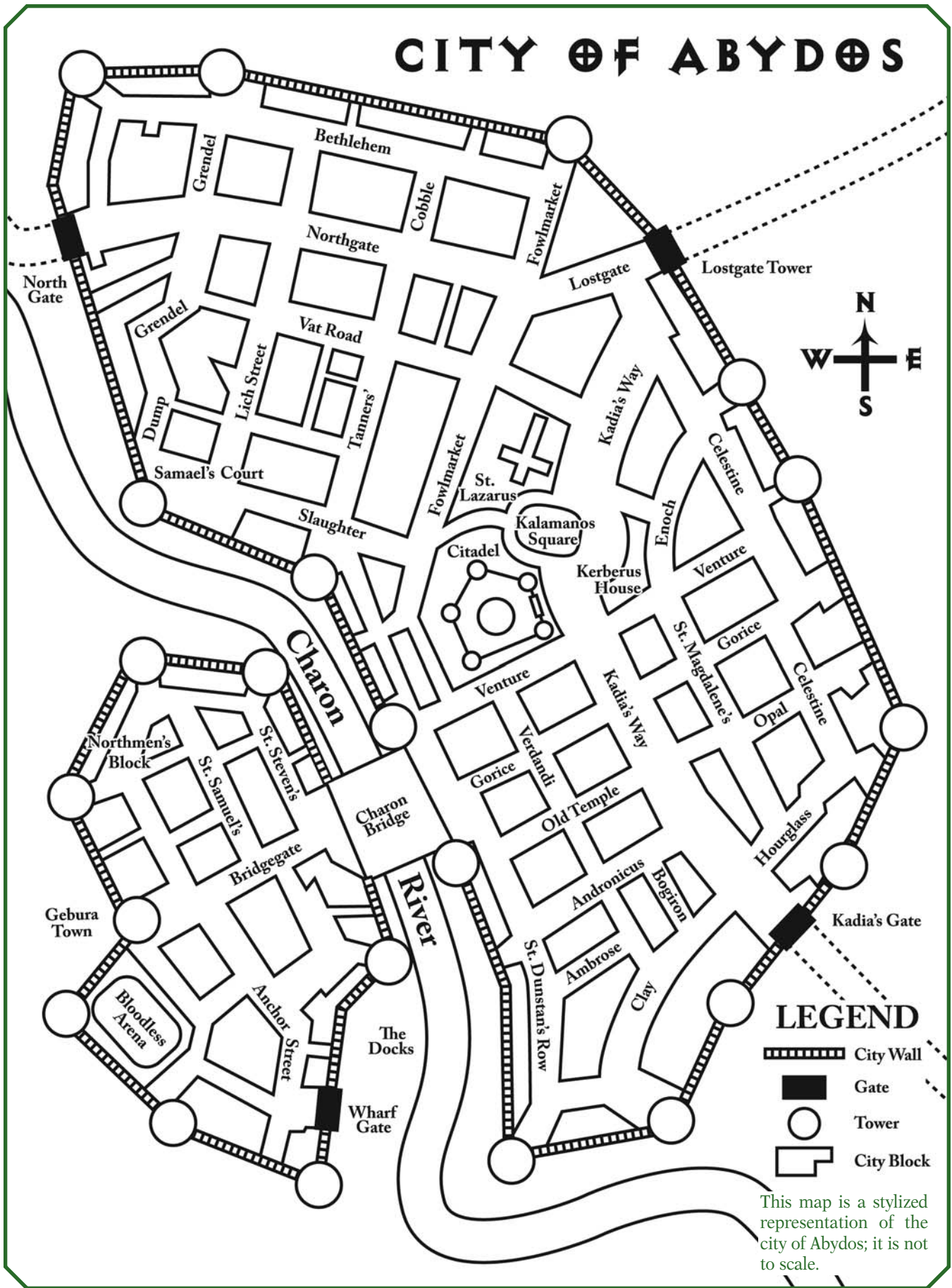
a strange nightmarish existence as years pass them by, until they are awakened by the words of the head librarian and pass briefly into the keeping of some strange wizard. Most are taken to the borrower’s study, where they are kept chained to a wall or desk while being consulted or copied, then returned.

Upon being awakened for the first time, most scrolls struggle, attempt to communicate, or shed tears; as they are mute and manacled, they are unlikely to achieve much. After a few awakenings, many flesh scrolls retreat into passive acceptance or go mad; a few try to make the best of their weird existence.

Some borrowers choose to interact with their scrolls, since, after all, they are alive, and in many cases, have seen some interesting places (like the interiors of other wizards’ studies. A scroll cannot talk, but telepathy spells, writing (if the scroll is literate), or crude sign language are possible.

As all the scrolls are extremely attractive, some borrowers have been tempted to become intimate with them. Provided that the scroll is returned cleaned, the head librarian does not complain. In a few rare situations over the centuries, a borrower has been unwise enough to have befriended or even fallen in love with a flesh scroll, and one or two scrolls have managed to escape. As a matter of policy, the library does not approve of such liaisons, and will not release scrolls from its custody willingly.

# CITY OF ABYDOS



# RESIDENT EVILS

Over the centuries, magical accidents and experiments have summoned a number of demons into Abydos. A few were cunning or powerful enough to avoid banishment, usually by finding a niche in the wicked city's ecology and occupying it.

## GLITTERTOOTH

Glittertooth looks like a handsome man or beautiful woman: tall and fit, with long black hair and piercing eyes. It wears dark, travel-stained leathers and a heavy cloak. Its tone of voice is always low and faintly amused. Glittertooth seems human until opening its mouth: The teeth are diamonds and very sharp.

It walks the streets of Abydos, seeking souls. Glittertooth can sense emotions, and it looks for hopeless people who want revenge. It enjoys finding betrayed lovers, rape victims, battered spouses, and those whose loved ones were murdered. It is a killer-for-hire. Glittertooth charges \$1 – and your soul, which it makes perfectly clear. Only the lost and desperate agree.

It is discriminating and fulfills only a couple of commissions every year. The demon uses its advantages and Mind-Reading spells to help it find and bargain with clients. If a customer agrees to its terms, Glittertooth uses Soul Jar on them. The “jar” is one of the demon's diamond teeth. There is no immediate effect – but if they later die, they can't be resurrected, and their consciousness will awaken to find itself trapped in the demon's tooth, aware and helpless, for eternity.

Glittertooth always does its best to fulfill its commission. It is a deadly assassin: It can change shape and read minds. It studies its targets carefully, plays with them, and then kills them in the most horrific, sadistic, and ironic fashion it can. Its one weakness is that it is a demon.

*Example:* After a drunken fisherman brutally raped a beggar girl, she hired Glittertooth. In female form, the demon lured the rapist into an alley with the promise of sex, then beat him unconscious. The man awoke tied up in his boat, drifting on the river. The demon told him, “I thought we'd go fishing for our date. I brought a hook, but oops, I forgot bait . . .” Next morning, a group of fishermen found a pile of fish in their friend's boat. When they gutted the fish, they found fingers, toes, and other body parts.

It likes to play cat-and-mouse games. It may use Dream Projection and Alter Body or Visage on victims to horrify them before slaying them.

If slain, Glittertooth's 40 teeth are worth \$1,000 each. Each presently holds several souls, some of people still alive. Glittertooth has been slain or banished before, to reappear in Abydos a few years later. Something attracts it.

### Glittertooth

946 points

**ST** 20 [100]; **DX** 13 [60]; **IQ** 13 [60]; **HT** 15 [50].  
Damage 2d-1/3d+2; BL 80 lbs.; HP 45 [50]; Will 16 [15]; Per 13 [0]; FP 20 [15].  
Basic Speed 7.00 [0]; Basic Move 7 [0]; Dodge 11\*; Parry 12\*; Block 11\*.  
6'; 170 lbs.

### Social Background

TL: 3 [0].

CF: Abydos [0].

Languages: English (Native) [0]; Greek (Native) [6]; Hebrew (Native) [6]; Latin (Native) [6].

### Advantages

Absolute Direction [5]; Acute Detect 5 (Hopeless anger) [10]; Ambidexterity [5]; Appearance (Handsome) [12]; Combat Reflexes [15]; Dark Vision [25]; Detect (Hopeless anger) [10]; DR 3 [15]; Doesn't Eat or Drink [10]; Doesn't Sleep [20]; Elastic Skin [20]; Empathy [15]; Extra Attack 1 [25]; Magery 4 [45]; Regeneration (Very Fast) [100]; Teeth (Fangs) [2]; Unaging [15]; Unfazeable [15]; Unkillable 3 [150]; Unusual Background (Arch-Mage) [10].

### Disadvantages

Dependency (Mana; Very Common; Constantly) [-25]; Dread (Holy Objects) [-10]; Obsession (12) (Wreak vengeance in exchange for souls) [-10]; Sadism (12) [-15]; Social Stigma (Monster) [-15]; Supernatural Features (No Shadow) [-10]; Unnatural Feature (Diamond teeth) [-1].

Quirks: Nasty sense of humor. [-1]

*Glittertooth seeks hopeless people who desire revenge.*

### Skills

Area Knowledge (Abydos) (E) IQ+1 [2]-14; Brawling (E) DX+3 [8]-16; Broadsword (A) DX [2]-13; Cloak (A) DX+1 [4]-14; Intimidation (A) Will [2]-16; Sex Appeal (A) HT-1 [1]-14†; Stealth (A) DX+2 [8]-15.

### Spells‡

Alter Body (H) IQ+8 [20]-21; Alter Visage (H) IQ+8 [20]-21; Climbing (H) IQ+2 [1]-15; Clumsiness (H) IQ+2 [1]-15; Control Limb (H) IQ+2 [1]-15; Counterspell (H) IQ+2 [1]-15; Death Vision (H) IQ+2 [1]-15; Dream Sending (H) IQ+2 [1]-15; Dream Projection (H) IQ+2 [1]-15; Dream Viewing (H) IQ+2 [1]-15; Fumble (H) IQ+2 [1]-15; Hinder (H) IQ+2 [1]-15; Lend Energy (H) IQ+2 [1]-15; Lend Vitality (H) IQ+2 [1]-15; Mind-Reading (H) IQ+4 [4]-17; Mind-Sending (H) IQ+2 [1]-15; Minor Healing (H) IQ+2 [1]-15; Sense Emotion (H) IQ+3 [2]-16; Sense Foes (H) IQ+2 [1]-15; Sense Life (H) IQ+2 [1]-15; Sense Spirit (H) IQ+2 [1]-15; Shapeshifting (Crow) (H) IQ+2 [2]-15; Soul Jar (VH) IQ+12 [40]-25; Spasm (H) IQ+2 [1]-15; Steal Energy (H) IQ+2 [1]-15; Steal Vitality (H) IQ+2 [1]-15; Summon Spirit (H) IQ+2 [1]-15; Touch (H) IQ+2 [1]-15; Truthsayer (H) IQ+2 [1]-15; Ward (H) IQ+2 [1]-15; Zombie (H) IQ+2 [1]-15.

\* Includes +1 from Combat Reflexes.

† Includes +4 from Handsome Appearance.

‡ All spells include +4 from Magery.

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