

Like a Poppet on a (Pulling) String Pulling Strings in GURPS Cabal

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The excellent **Conspiracy X** from *Eden Studios* provides a series of mechanics for measuring the influence and pull that members of the conspiracy have within the various governmental and civilian organisations which they have been able to infiltrate, and the excellent **GURPS Conspiracy X**, also from Eden Studios, provides a conversion of this mechanic to **GURPS 3rd Edition** rules. Although the way they are represented in that book is specific to the Conspiracy X background there is no intrinsic reason why they should not be adapted to serve the same purpose in any other game which involves conspiratorial groups infiltrating and controlling other organisations - such as **GURPS Cabal**. This article will attempt to present rules modifications for using the Sphere of Influence Patrons, Pulling Strings, and Resource Points rules from **GURPS Conspiracy X** in the setting of **GURPS Cabal** - it is primarily intended to be used when constructing outer circle Cabalist PCs and using it to do so will require access to both **GURPS Cabal** and **GURPS Conspiracy X**, it is primarily intended for use with **GURPS 3rd Edition**, but could be used with 4th Edition with little modification (although modifying the rest of the **GURPS Cabal** rules for 4th Edition would be non-trivial, and goes beyond the scope of this article).

1 Sphere of Influence Patrons

In the **GURPS Cabal** setting there are seven different SoI Patrons (see p.CX56) available. These are the six mundane SoI Patrons: Military (Mil), Intelligence (Int), Science & Research (S&R), Criminal (Crm), Law, and Civilian (Civ) which cover the same areas as they do in **GURPS Conspiracy X**. The Paranormal Sphere of Influence from **GURPS Conspiracy X** is not available in a **GURPS Cabal** game, instead it is replaced by the new Cabal (Cab) SoI Patron. The Cabal SoI Patron covers influence in the Cabal itself, and in the loose supernatural community which it represents. The Advantage which governs influence in the Cabal is almost always Rank (Cabalistic) (p.CB100).

The cost of these SoI Patrons is calculated exactly as in **GURPS Conspiracy X**, and all rules governing them are the same unless this article specifies otherwise. The Influence governing advantages in the Cabal world are normally the same as in a

GURPS Conspiracy X game, however many Cabalists have indirect control and influence within organisations which they are not themselves actually members, in order to represent this the GM may wish to allow Cabalists to purchase Allies with the appropriate Sphere of Influence (and optionally the Minion Enhancement from **GURPS 4th Edition** if the GM allows it) – alternatively higher ranking Cabalists may often have very little Influence in any SoI other than the Cabal itself, and simply use the Trading Favours Pulling String (see below) to contact lower ranking Cabalists who do have such Influence. Finally the GM may wish to allow supernatural Mind Control abilities to be assigned as Influence Governing Advantages for any of the Mundane SoI Patrons - with each level of Telepathy (for those with Telecontrol), or every level of Magery (for those with spells from the Mind Control college) to be a level of Influence in *one* such Sphere of Influence.

The Usually Reliable reliability level is not available for the Cabal SoI Patron, as contacts within the Cabal are rarely, if ever, entirely to be trusted.

2 Jobs

Some Cabalists have powerful day jobs as high-ranking officials and business magnates - others spend their entire time researching dark and mysterious secrets which man was not meant to know. The former are liable to have the same kind of jobs as are available to **GURPS Conspiracy X** characters (though not any of the jobs that require a Paranormal SoI Patron), the latter will likely have no job in the normal sense of the term - and will most likely lack SoI Patrons other than the Cabal one.

Many items and Advantages in **GURPS Conspiracy X** have particular professions as prerequisites. Mostly these can be kept unchanged, but unlike Aegis the Cabal is an international organisation, and so characters may have high-ranking positions in governmental, civilian, or intelligence organisations outside the United States. In this case most such organisations are comparable to their American equivalents (MI6 operatives, for example, probably have similar Pulling Strings and Resources available to them as to CIA operatives).

3 Pulling Strings

Sending requests for aid up to the Inner Circle, if it's even possible, is likely to result in, at best, indifference. As a result the Cabal has no equivalent of the Aegis Pulling Strings available to all **GURPS Conspiracy X** characters. The ordinary Pulling Strings (starting on p.CX74) which require one of the mundane SoI Patrons are generally still available (although some may be considerably less useful to a Cabal Lodge than to an Aegis Cell due to the differences in the kind of challenges each faces) - those that require a specific profession are available to characters in the appropriate profession, or one the GM rules is similar enough. Generally those pulling strings which would require the Paranormal SoI Patron, or any profession which requires it, will not be available in a Cabal game.

The Cabal Sol Patron gives access to the following Pulling Strings - some of which are the same as those found in **GURPS Conspiracy X**, and some of which are unique to the Cabal:

Abyssal Contact Varies
A Demonic Contract or (Cab Sol)

This Pulling String is built as a Contact, with a base cost of 2 for a minor demon, 4 points for a more major one, and 6 points for a member of Hell's own aristocracy.

Blood Bank 2 points
Civ/S&R Sol

The character with this Pulling String has access to an untraceable supply of human blood. No Appearance roll is required to obtain five blood bags (each containing about 1 pint of blood) per week. More than that will require an appearance roll at +2 with a penalty equal to the number of extra blood bags required within a one week period.

Special requirements, such as only female blood (-3), only catholics (-6) or only virgins (-8) provide additional penalties on the appearance roll.

Divine Patron Varies
Power Investiture with a Pagan Deity or (Cab Sol)

This Pulling String represents having the favour of one of the Pagan Gods, and is built exactly as Divine Favour.

Faerie Contacts Varies
Cab Sol

This Pulling string is built as a Contact, the base cost is 2 points for a minor sprite, 4 points for a boggart or goblin, and 6 points for a faerie noble (such as a Sidthe Lord).

Faerie Influence

3 points

Cab Sol

This Pulling String represents access to, and standing within, the Seelie court in Faerie. No roll is required to gain an audience with the court. An appearance roll at +2 will grant safe passage back out of Faerie again after visiting the court. An unmodified appearance roll will allow safe-passage through Faerie for the possessor and a small group of companions, good for a year and a day after the initial roll. An appearance roll at -2 will grant a small favour from the Fae (such as the learning of a Faerie spell of small power). A larger penalty is required for a larger favour. Only a success by 2 or more will guarantee getting the favour asked for, otherwise Oberon will grant whatever boon he feels is appropriate. A failure will result in an actively malicious "gift". A natural 18 will result in a truly unpleasant example of the Faerie sense of humour.

Iconic Contact

Varies

At least 10 spells in the relevant College or (Cab Sol)

This Pulling String is used to represent contacts amongst the spirits of a particular Decan. A specific decan must be chosen, and this String can be bought multiple times (up to a maximum of 36, naturally). It is priced as a Contact with base cost of 2 for a minor Numen, 4 for a low-ranking Eikone, or 6 for an Eikone powerful enough to have the ear of an Aethyr.

Laboratory/Workshop

p.CX82

Cab Sol

Those with the Cabal Sol Patron may purchase this Pulling String for access to a magical or Alchemical Laboratory or Workshop for the usual cost. This will generally mean access to an Aeon Labs facility. The Appearance roll is at an additional -2 penalty over and above any modifiers described in **GURPS Conspiracy X** due to the extreme rarity of Magical facilities.

Minions

2 points

Cab Sol

The character has a ready supply of minor occultists - such as secret society members, cultists, those wishing to become Initiates, or even minor supernatural creatures. An appearance roll at +2 will bring 2d minions built on at most a quarter of the Cabalist's points value within 1d hours. Minions are rarely reliable, and are unlikely to know the full details of the existence of the Cabal. Each additional -2 penalty will double the number of minions available. Minions with 50% of the Cabalist's points value add an extra -2 penalty to the appearance roll and increase arrival time to 1d days.

Minions are rarely very loyal, and will likely betray the character for a high enough bribe. Exactly what will suffice will vary from minion to minion (GM's call), though Mystical power is likely to work better than cash. Honourable minions who will stay bought require an extra -2 on the appearance roll, but even they will likely abandon their leader if their lives are threatened.

No Questions Asked

p.CX84

NSA Professional or Cab Sol

It is always in the interests of higher level Cabal lodges to ensure that the activities of the Cabal go unnoticed - even if the Lodge in question is not allied to those in danger of getting themselves noticed. For that reason Cabalists are permitted to use the No Questions Asked Pulling String - but unlike the NSA version a success by less than four will result in unwanted attention from a more-powerful lodge wanting to know why the Cabalist in question was so close to being noticed.

Occult Library

p.CX85

Cab Sol

This Pulling String allows the possessing Cabalist to gain access to the library of an allied Lodge. With an Appearance+4 roll a Cabalist may gain access to an occult library that gives no penalty to Research or Thaumatology rolls for researching information on a specific subject (magic related to a particular Decan, the inhabitants of Atlantis, Early Egyptian magical items, etc ...), with an Appearance+2 roll a library which gives a +2 bonus may be obtained in a specific area, and an unmodified roll allows access to a library which grants a bonus of +4 on such rolls.

Safe House

p.CX88

Crm/Int/Law/Cab Sol

Scholomance

2 points

Cab Sol

A character with this Pulling String has studied at a Scholomance, a Black School, and is able to return for further training in the techniques of Hermetic Magic. An Appearance+5 roll will allow the character to receive a week-long course which constitutes 200 hours of study in a well known Basic spell. The same roll can be made with a penalty equal to the prerequisite count of the spell in order to learn a more difficult/advanced, but still well-known, piece of magic. Spells which are rarer will attract additional penalties or not be available at all, at the GMs discretion.

Supernatural Lore

p.CX89

Cab Sol

Supernatural Medical Support

3 points

Cab Sol

A Successful unmodified appearance roll will allow the character to locate nearby medical facilities which are capable of dealing with Supernatural wounds and of providing medical assistance to supernatural creatures. An Appearance-2 roll will locate a Lodge willing to provide magical medical assistance, for a price.

Trading Favours Cab Sol or (Any Sol)

5pts

A Cabalist may not himself have access to a needed resource, but with this Pulling String he can find another Lodge that does. Trivial mundane resources require no roll. If the Cabalist is looking for a lodge with a particular pulling string he must apply a penalty equal to the number of points that pulling string would cost to buy, if it is a pulling string available through the Cabal Sphere of Influence then there is an additional +2 bonus. If the Cabalist is looking for a Lodge with access to a particular spell then the GM should allow an appearance roll with a penalty equal to the spell's prerequisite count, and an additional +2 bonus if, in the GM's opinion, the spell is commonly known within the Cabal. If the Cabalist is looking for a Lodge with access to a particular item or facility which would normally cost RPs then make an appearance roll with a +2 bonus and an extra penalty equal to the number of RPs the item or facility would normally cost.

The use of this Pulling String in no way guarantees that the owning Lodge will be prepared to let the Cabalist use the resource - that's matter of roleplaying and cutting a deal of some sort. The GM determines what the other Lodge will want in exchange based upon how valuable the resource is. A natural 18 on the appearance roll will always attract the attention of a hostile Lodge with the desired resource.

Translators Cab Sol

p.CX89

Note that the Funding Pulling String is not available from the Cabal Sol (although it's still available from other SOIs), funds are funnelled from mundane organisations into the Cabal, not the other way around.

4 Resource Points

Resource points in the Cabal setting can be spent on most of the items upon which they can be spent in **GURPS Conspiracy X**, however, as with Pulling Strings, many of the available resources are not going to be particularly useful to most Cabalists. Others may even be more trouble than they are worth - for example an Aegis cell would find being situated on a military base very useful, as it provides extra security - but a Cabal Lodge would likely find it inconvenient, since many of them may not be able to even pass as human, let alone military personnel - similarly a surveillance van might be of some use for a Cabalist, but a lot less often than it would be for an Aegis agent.

4.1 Location Resource Descriptions

All of the Location Resources described in **GURPS Conspiracy X** (p.CX119) are available to a Cabal Lodge, but some additional Location Resources are also available. Of the pre-existing Location Resources the ones most likely to be used for a cabal lodge-house are Estate (often, but not always with the Armoured Location modifier to make it a castle), Office Building, Private Residence, and Underground.

Sacred Geometry (varies) +2 RPs
Cab Sol

This specialised location has been designed to focus the energies of one Decan, providing a bonus to all spells related to that Decan within it's bounds. This costs +2 RPs per Space for each +1 bonus to spells. No location can give bonuses to multiple Decans by this mechanism.

Crypt (6) 1 RP
Any Sol

This represents a small crypt, larger ones use the Underground Location instead. The main advantage of a crypt is that it is underground away from the sun, and that few people will voluntarily hang around a graveyard at night. The disadvantages, on the other hand, are numerous - it is small, insecure, and has no modern facilities. They do tend to make good hiding places for items or supernatural beings that need to be kept away from the main Lodge-house however.

Restrictions: No 4-space facilities, no airstrip, no helipad, and no facilities that require electricity (which is most of them).

Academic Institution (8) 10 RPs
Civ Sol

In many ways a University or College is the perfect place for a Cabal Lodge to hide itself on Assiah. There are good quality modern facilities, access to good a quality library, often good laboratory facilities, and a culture that respects eccentricity, secrecy, and odd working hours. This resource represents space within the main campus buildings of such an institution - many will also own the equivalent of Industrial Parks or Office Buildings which must be purchased separately. This location includes access to a good quality general purpose library and insecure but relatively private accommodation for as many (relatively human) Lodge members as required at no extra cost.

Restrictions: No Airstrip or Helipad, no more than one 4 space facility.

Astral (16)

12 RPs

Cab Sol

A Lodge-house located in Yetzirah, Nod, secreted away inside a memory palace, located in the eye of the beholder, or in some other location not normally accessible to Assiah is probably the very best place for a Cabal lodge to hang up it's pointy wizard hat - provided the Lodge-members themselves can access it! Such a location is almost impossible for a mundane enemy to locate and extremely difficult even for other Cabalists, it may however suffer attack from entities on it's own realm.

Restrictions: getting in or out requires a Planeshift spell or the Permanent Gate facility (see later in this article), vehicle access is likely to be almost impossible, and as a result no airstrip or helipad is possible. On the other hand vehicle hangers for vehicles capable of travelling in the other realm in which it is located can be used without penalty.

Church (6)

2 RPs

Civ Sol

Many Cabalists would find a church the very last place that they would want to live or work - but by no means all. A church is large, often easily protected, and (most importantly) looks impressive and makes a statement. What's more, a church has some natural protection against many forms of supernatural. Many churches also have Crypts, or even Catacombs (use the Underground location, p.CX120) beneath them.

Restrictions: A church may not have more than one 4-space facility, nor will it have an airstrip or a helipad.

4.2 Facility Resource Descriptions

Most of the Facility Descriptions in **GURPS Conspiracy X** (p.CX121) are available in the Cabal setting, although any which require the Paranormal SoI Patron are unavailable, and many will be of little use to a Cabal Lodge. Occult libraries, magical workshops, and alchemical labs are covered by the Laboratory/Workshop/Library facility (p.CX124) and come in the same quality brackets as mundane facilities do. Vehicle Hangers and bays can be used to represent storage for airships, flying boats, galleys for sailing the Pearl Bright Ocean, or any other strange vehicle which a cabalist could possibly want.

4.2.1 Extra-planar Facilities

The following facility is used to allow access to other planes of existence, the GM may wish to disallow it if his campaign is to be set mostly on Assiah.

Permanent Gate (varies)
Cab Sol

20 RPs

This facility represents a permanent magical gateway between two locations within the four realms. 20 RPs will purchase such a link, which will connect two facilities. In most cases it will be more cost-effective to simply use Sacred Geometry to make part of the location give bonuses to spells connected to Iudal. This default gate is one hex in size - but a larger gate which takes up one space in each of two facilities and allows the movement of vehicles is available for 30 RPs.

4.3 Equipment Resource Descriptions

All of the Weapon, Surveillance, Intrusion, Communications, Electronics, Software, scientific, Medical, Clothing, Combat Accessory, Restraint, Toolkit, Hostile Environment, Vehicle, and vehicle Accessory Resources described in **GURPS Conspiracy X** will be available in a Cabal game, should the characters have access to the correct prerequisites. Of the Restricted Resources only the Magic Van, Special Weapons, and SR-71 Blackbird might be available, at GMs discretion. The following new Restricted Resource Descriptions are available, however:

Magic Items
Cab Sol

1 RP/energy of enchantment

Magic items are rare in the world of the Cabal, but for those in the know they are occasionally auctioned by Cabal members and purchased by other members of the Cabal. It is not unusual for the most powerful items to be worth more than their own weight in precious stones.

Gemstones Cab Sol

see below

High quality gemstones can be bought by anyone with enough money from any number of jewellers or diamond merchants. The commercial prices of diamonds and other gems are maintained at their current level because the diamond marketing cartels have large stock-piles of gem-quality stones which they keep in storage rather than selling so as not to flood the market. Powerstones are merely the most mundane of the many uses which the Cabal can find for high quality gemstones, and so, as with any other resource that it finds useful, the Cabal long-ago co-opted the major gemstone merchants – allowing connected Cabalists to purchase these objects at wholesale prices.

1RP will purchase 64 gems suitable for enchanting as one point powerstones, each doubling in the size of the stones quadruples the price or quarters the number. Hence 1RP could also purchase 16 two point stones, 4 four point stones, or 1 eight point stone. To acquire a stone capable of holding an enchantment as a 32 point powerstone would cost 16RPs.