

# GURPS®

Fourth Edition

# *Encounters: The Harrowed Hearts Club™*



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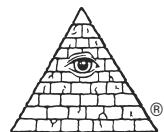
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*It's a rough place, son. In fact, you have to puke twice and show your razor just to get in.*

– Ronnie Hawkins

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# INTRODUCTION

Bars, clubs, taverns, and music venues have been part of roleplaying from the beginning: where parties meet, quests are given, jobs planned, loot divided, and steam let off. They can also serve as adventure locations in their own right. This supplement offers tools to quickly generate realistic designs and interesting NPCs for watering holes and entertainment venues. It also provides four ready-made scenarios.

As written, the Harrowed Hearts Club is located somewhere in North America. Its history stretches from mid-19th century to the present. But the archetypes of such establishments are remarkably resilient. This supplement is relevant to a seedy 1930s Berlin nightclub, Silk Road caravanserai, decrepit starport discotheque, or remote Yrth tavern.

## ENCOUNTERS AT A GLANCE

*Jewels, Jezebels, and Jake Leg* (pp. 12-14): A pulp encounter for low-level **GURPS Action** or similar campaigns. On the trail of stolen jewels hidden in the club, the party faces challenges, expected and unexpected, in finding the loot.

*The Lady With the Red Cameo* (pp. 14-16): This encounter blends urban fantasy with Gothic elements. Meeting an unusual ghost, investigators have the tables turned when they are shifted back in time, confronting the worst disaster in the club's history.

*The Deadly Chamber* (pp. 16-18): Heroes discover that more than money is at stake when a backroom poker game adds macabre rules.

*Nobody Gets Out Alive* (pp. 18-21): A night out takes a supernatural turn when patrons witness something they shouldn't. Someone doesn't want any survivors to tell the tale.

*The juke joint, the honky tonk, and the ballroom also represent one more thing, anthropologically speaking: a ceremonial context for the male-with-female-duet dance flirtation and embrace, upon which the zoological survival of the human species has always been predicated.*

– Albert Murray

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jon Black is a music journalist and music historian from Austin, Texas. He spends far too much of his life in music venues. Jon has been playing roleplaying games for more than 30 years and **GURPS** for more than 20 years. He is the author of the *Bel Nemeton* series from 18th Wall Productions. In early 2018, look for Jon's novel *Gabriel's Trumpet*, a supernatural mystery set among the great jazz cities of the Roaring Twenties.

## ABOUT GURPS

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of **GURPS** players. We can be reached by email: [info@sjgames.com](mailto:info@sjgames.com). Our address is SJ Games, P.O. Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Resources include:

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[twitter.com/sjgames](https://twitter.com/sjgames). Share your campaign teaser in 140 characters or fewer with #GURPSHook on Twitter. Or explore that hashtag for ideas to add to your own game! The **GURPS Encounters: The Harrowed Hearts Club** web page is [gurps.sjgames.com/harrowedheartsclub](http://gurps.sjgames.com/harrowedheartsclub).

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*Errata.* Everyone makes mistakes, including us – but we do our best to fix our errors. Errata pages for **GURPS** releases are available at [sjgames.com/errata/gurps](http://sjgames.com/errata/gurps).

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.

## Typical Location

*Storeroom:* Often going years between thorough cleanings, storerooms create opportunities for interesting items to remain undiscovered (until nosy adventurers come through).

## Entertainer Space

Establishments hosting musicians or other live entertainment require areas to support them.

## Typical Locations

*Green Room:* A lounge for entertainers, typically adjacent to the stage. Common in older or affluent venues and seldom actually green. Elaborate establishments may also have smaller dressing rooms.

*Stage:* Dedicated to performances, the stage is clearly visible from part or the entire floor. It may be an old riser, an elaborate bandstand, or anything in between.

## Business Space

Clubs are businesses. Most have areas devoted to conventional aspects of commerce.

## Typical Locations

*Office:* A space with standard accounting and administrative tools for a small business of the appropriate time and place. A safe or strongbox is typically present.

*Private Meeting Room:* A presentable location where owners or management can hold conferences with employees, vendors, etc. Can be converted into an *event room*, *function room*, or *private dining room* rented out to patrons.

## Outside

The club's exterior and grounds also merit consideration. As with interior décor, exterior appearance deserves at least a brief description. The GM should determine the size and location of any notable external features (fountains, parking lot, patio, walkable garden, etc.). Also, consider possible security features. Security cameras appear at TL7 and are widespread at TL8. At lower TLs, speak-easies (or any establishment hiding something) may indulge in guards, peepholes, or even periscopes.

## Typical Locations

*Emergency Exits and Fire Escapes:* Doors intended specifically for egress during fires or other emergencies appear at TL5, are commonplace by TL6, and usually mandatory by TL7 (but even at TL8, there may not be sufficient exits for a major crisis). Emergency exits offer opportunities to break into closed establishments or sneak into open ones. At TL8, emergency exits often have basic alarms; roll Electronics Operation (Security) at +2 to defeat. For multistory establishments, fire

escapes combine emergency exits and external stairwells (an interesting challenge for those with Acrophobia). During TL6, enclosed canvas chutes were sometimes used (bad for Claustrophobia).

*Smoking Area:* Where indoor smoking is banned, clubs often have a designated smoking area outside. This can be large and easily accessible (like an adjacent patio with weather-proof chairs, tables, and small ashtrays) or small and remote (like a patch of concrete under a lamp with a free-standing ashtray). The latter, especially, provides opportunities to meet and converse with NPC smokers.

*Trash Receptacles:* Typically located away from patrons' view, size and quantity are proportional to the venue. Large commercial receptacles date from late TL6. Standardized trash cans appear at late TL5, a byproduct of municipal garbage collection. Before then, establishments make their own arrangements. Trash receptacles offer convenient disposal of unwanted objects (evidence, bodies, extra-planar artifacts, etc.). A venue with a kitchen may also have large, dedicated grease/oil containers, in which heroes can find lots of flammable liquid.

## DECIDING ON DIMENSIONS

There are no concrete formulas for generating venue layouts, but here are some general guidelines.

*Size:* Venues range from 100-square-foot bars with outdoor seating to 75,000-square-foot TL8 mega-clubs. A "typical" venue is around 2,500 square feet.

*Allocating Space:* For venues emphasizing elaborate food preparation or live entertainment, devote 60% of square footage to patron space and allocate the remainder as appropriate for the establishment. Increase the percentage of patron space for venues with limited or no food service and not emphasizing entertainment.

*Occupancy:* A TL8 restaurant accommodates one patron per 15 square feet of patron space. A bar or music venue requires half that. Lower TL venues may be more crowded, down to a physical minimum of about four square feet per patron.

### Sample Venue Sizes

| Square Feet | Description and Examples  |
|-------------|---|
| 100         | As small as a venue can get. Food and beverage space is inside without additional facilities. Patron space is outside.  |
| 200         | The smallest practical indoor venue. Area is divided evenly between food and beverage space and (cramped) patron space. |
| 1,000+      | Hole in the wall: cozy pub, college bar, or juke joint; e.g., Bluebird Café, The Bottom Line.                           |
| 2,000+      | Average venue; e.g., CBGB, Mother-In-Law Lounge.  |
| 5,000+      | Comfortable venue; e.g., Gruene Hall, Moulin Rouge, The Roxy.   |
| 10,000+     | Large venues; e.g., The Savoy, Studio 54.   |
| 25,000+     | Huge venues; e.g., The Copacabana, Longhorn Ballroom.   |
| 75,000      | World's largest venues; e.g., OMNIA, Privilege Ibiza.   |

## Using Templates

Traits and skills are based upon the archetypical, stereotypical, or logical. Templates are scalable for average people or cinematic NPCs. The GM should raise or lower attributes and secondary characteristics as necessary to fulfill the needs of the encounter.

When asked to “pick any” from a selection of traits or skills, the GM should pick any or all options fitting the NPC’s concept. Use (12) for disadvantage self-control numbers, unless intended as especially minor or significant. Addictions, Delusions, and Secrets can be changed to reflect the campaign setting.

Templates are provided to simplify, not restrict. A GM desiring a manager with Combat Reflexes or bouncer who speaks Aramaic should go ahead.

Templates are usable for PCs in an “ordinary folks” campaign, such as low-powered horror.

*All you have to do is follow  
three simple rules . . . never  
underestimate your opponent . . .  
never start anything inside the bar  
. . . be nice.*

– Dalton, in *Road House*

## Bartender

Essential to any watering hole, whether humble or elegant. Cinematic bartenders may have Eidetic Memory and astronomical levels of Area Knowledge (Local) and Current Affairs (Regional) – *if* customers have cash to make it worthwhile.

**ST 10; DX 10; IQ 10; HT 11.**

Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10; Will 10; Per 10; FP 11.

Basic Speed 5.25; Basic Move 5; Dodge 8; Parry 8.

SM 0; 5’3” to 6’; 120-180 lbs.

**Advantages:** Pick any of Alcohol Tolerance, Appearance (Attractive), Charisma 1-2, Enhanced Dodge 1, Fearlessness 1-4 *or* Unfazeable, No Hangover, Sensitive *or* Empathy, or Wealth (Comfortable).

**Disadvantages:** Pick any of Addiction (Psychedelics *or* Tobacco), Alcoholism, Chummy *or* Gregarious, Compulsive Carousing, Delusion (“A drunk driver is a safe driver”), Impulsiveness, Lecherousness, Sense of Duty (Club *or* Customers), Secret (Stealing from the till), or Wealth (Struggling *or* Poor).

**Skills:** Professional Skill (Bartender)-13, Area Knowledge (Neighborhood *or* Town)-10; Brawling-10; *and* Carousing-13. ● Pick any of Connoisseur (Alcohol)-10, Diplomacy-9, Fast-Talk-10, Guns (Pistol)-10, Knife-10, Psychology-8, Savoir-Faire (High Society *or* Mafia)-10, Sex Appeal-10, or Streetwise-9.

## Bouncer

Fictional bouncers are unstoppable bruisers or martial artists with PhDs. Real clubs don’t like overhead or liability. Good bouncers resolve trouble nonviolently. Great bouncers stop it before it starts. (See “The Gameable Bouncer” in *Pyramid* #3/42: *Noir* for more details about this job.)

**ST 11; DX 10; IQ 10; HT 10.**

Damage 1d-1/1d+1; BL 24 lbs.; HP 11; Will 10; Per 11; FP 10.

Basic Speed 5.00; Basic Move 5; Dodge 8; Parry 9.

SM 0; 5’10” to 6’6”; 150-250 lbs.

**Advantages:** Pick any of Alcohol Tolerance, Ambidexterity, Charisma 1, Combat Reflexes, Danger Sense, Empathy, Enhanced Dodge 1, Fearless 1-5, Fit, Hard to Subdue 1-2, High Pain Threshold, Indomitable, No Hangover, Penetrating Voice, Peripheral Vision, Recovery, Reputation +1 (Protector), or Wealth (Comfortable).

**Disadvantages:** Pick any of Addiction (Cocaine, PCP, *or* Tobacco), Alcoholism, Appearance (Unattractive), Bad Temper, Bully, Compulsive Carousing, Gigantism, Impulsiveness, No Sense of Humor, Overconfidence, Overweight, Post-Combat Shakes, Secret (Fugitive), Sense of Duty (Club), Stubbornness, or Wealth (Struggling).

## IS THERE A DOCTOR IN THE HOUSE?

Sometimes the question isn’t what skills an individual has, but whether *anyone* present has a particular skill (or language). The GM can decide by fiat or roll 3d against the target number listed in the table below based on commonness. Success means someone present knows the skill at 1d+10. For languages, roll 1d: 1-2 – Broken; 3-4 – Accented; 5-6 – Native.

Even if someone with the requisite skill is present, locating that person is a separate challenge. Carousing, Diplomacy, Savoir-Faire, and Streetwise are all potentially useful for this. Luck and Serendipity are helpful (“I don’t know; she just *looked* like someone who majored in Mayan astronomy!”).

The following table fits a club in a modern American city.

| <b>Commonness</b>  | <b>Chance</b> |
|--|---------------|
| Very Common; e.g., Area Knowledge (Local), Driving, Merchant   | 15 or less    |
| Common; e.g., Biology, Computer Operation, First Aid, Spanish  | 12 or less    |
| Uncommon; e.g., Archaeology, Boxing, Physician, Portuguese     | 9 or less     |
| Rare; e.g., Forgery, Intelligence Analysis, Occultism, Swahili | 6 or less     |

# NOBODY GETS OUT ALIVE

Local college students are filming a music video of Val and The Vagabonds at the Harrowed Hearts Club. Whether helping out or just hanging around, the protagonists are present when something paranormal is filmed. The club decides everyone has seen too much and it must leave no survivors. The heroes must choose between permanently ending the hauntings and simply escaping.

## AT A GLANCE: NOBODY GETS OUT ALIVE

**Setting:** Monster hunters, supernatural action (TL8).

**Useful Supplements:** The *GURPS Monster Hunters* series; *GURPS Horror*.

**Protagonists:** Designed for three to five 200-point characters; use *GURPS Monster Hunters 4: Sidekicks* to create “junior hunters.” *Useful Skills:* Combat skills (including non-lethal), Occultism, and Hidden Lore (Spirit Lore).

**Hooks:** Making a few bucks. Helping others. Enjoying music. Wrong place/wrong time.

**Key Locations:** Bar, floor, stage, storeroom (basement).

## EVENTS

Events 1, 2, and 3 must occur in sequence. Events 4 and 5 are possible reactions to 3.

Caitlin Attwood, “Lucky” Charlie, and Valerie Springer have relevant information and should be encountered while the band and film crew are setting up. Caitlin, the director, is using analog equipment (film cameras, ribbon mics, tape recorders, etc.) to sidestep the club’s notorious electronics problems. Charlie, who runs the band’s pyrotechnics, willingly details the various explosive effects he’s planning for the video. Val, the lead singer, waxes poetic over Billy Montgomery’s music and tragic death.

### 1. Special Guest

The band is a classic rockabilly five-piece (singer/rhythm guitar, lead guitar, pedal steel guitar, standing bass, and drummer). Their third song is “Nobody Gets Out Alive,” a melancholy rockabilly hit by Billy Montgomery. During the second verse, Billy’s ghost materializes and sings along. The GM should be unambiguous about the event’s supernatural nature. With Billy’s manifestation caught on film and witnessed by about 100 people, the club decides to clean house. Windows and doors slam shut as it attacks.

### 2. Barflies

Once the mortals are trapped, the club unleashes its minions: ghosts, possessed humans, and zombies. The GM should determine numbers of minions and innate powers of the club (pp. 6-7) based upon party strength and campaign flavor.

Three to five minions per combatant should provide enough challenge without being overwhelming.

The GM should emphasize, beyond minions, the club itself is attacking. Mention windows and doors shutting on their own. Telekinetic activity and other occurrences from the *Random Supernatural Events Table* (p. 7) provide hints. Observation at -4 spots thin tendrils of mist or ectoplasm around and trailing from minions (human and undead alike). Those with Medium or Psychometry might sense an overarching malice behind the attacks. If all else fails, have a ghost inform the heroes about what’s happening.

The ghosts and possessed humans only Attack, and zombies only All-Out Attack. The club won’t allow the minions to stop fighting unless they are unconscious or trapped, but the ghosts and humans battle with great reluctance.

Fates of the other 90-ish patrons, band members, and video crew should be based on the GM’s preferred flavor. Desperately fighting back, fleeing in terror, being crushed against locked doors, or simply becoming a tasty zombie snack are all valid options.

## Ghosts

The club dominates the souls of those who died within its walls or over whom it had significant influence. They have a variety of touch-based attacks.

**ST** 0; **DX** 14; **IQ** 10; **HT** 10.

Basic Speed 6.00; Basic Move 6; Dodge 9.

Damage N/A; BL N/A; HP 10; Will 10; Per 10; FP 20.

SM 0.

**Traits:** Dark Vision; Enhanced Move 1 (Ground); Fragile (Unnatural); High Pain Threshold; Injury Tolerance (Homogenous); Spirit (p. B263); Terror. • Chose one of Affliction 1 (HT; Heart Attack; Melee Attack, Reach C), Affliction 3 (HT-2; Melee Attack, Reach C), or Fatigue Attack 3d (Melee Attack, Reach C).

**Skills:** Brawling-14.

## Possessed Humans

Some of the regulars are taken over by the club’s spirit. These people are clearly *not* acting under their own volition. Disadvantages like Guilt Complex, Pacifism, and Sense of Duty apply to PC actions.

**ST** 11; **DX** 10; **IQ** 9; **HT** 11.

Damage 1d-1/1d+1; BL 24 lbs.; HP 11; Will 9; Per 9; FP 11.

Basic Speed 5.25; Basic Move 5; Dodge 8.

SM 0; 5’8 to 6’4; 150-250 lbs.

**Traits:** Duty (Club Spirit; Extremely Hazardous; Involuntary); Slave Mentality.

**Skills:** Brawling-13; any other melee combat skill at 12.

## Zombies

Walking undead lumber through any available portal (doors, windows, stairs, air/heating ducts, etc.) – whatever matches the GM’s preferred layout and atmosphere. These creatures combine elements of “fast” and “slow” archetypes.

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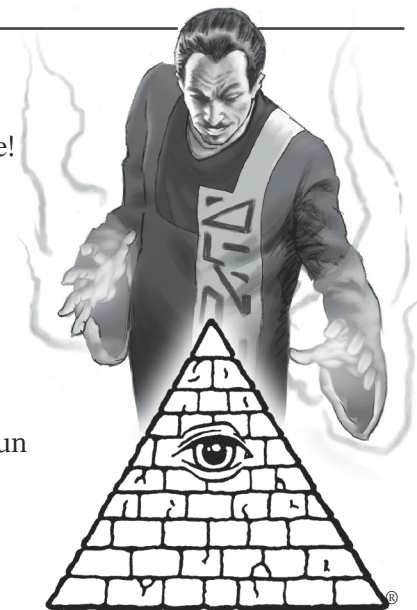
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