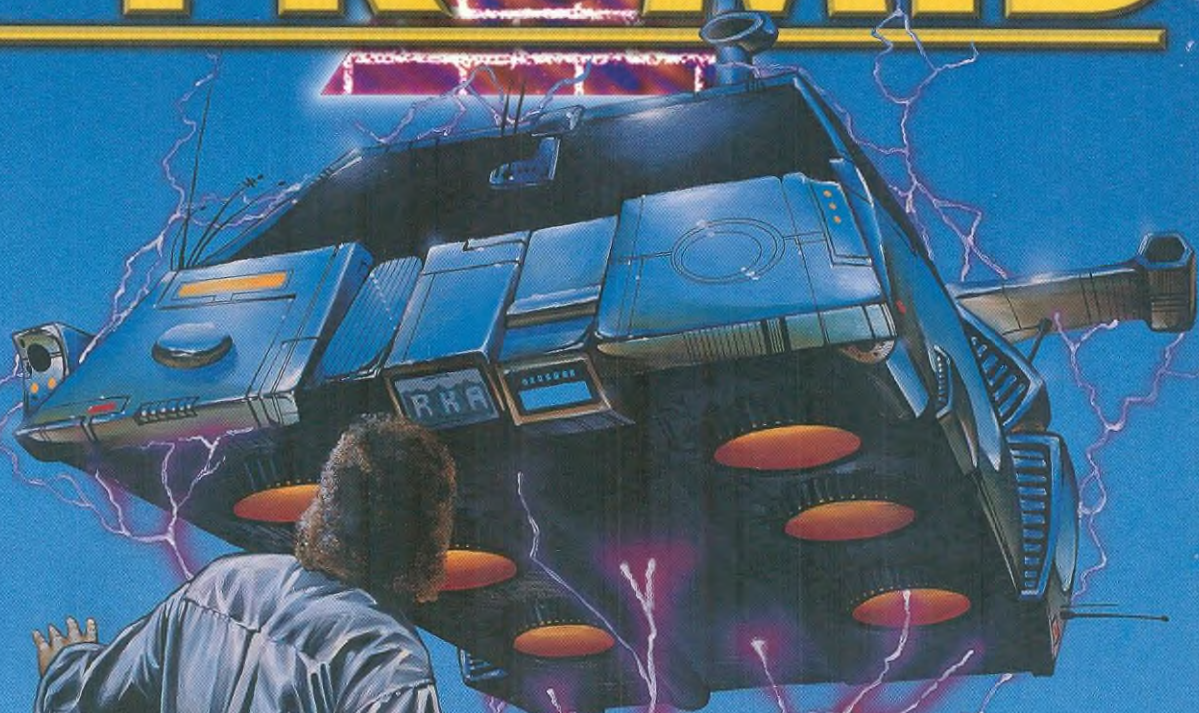


G U R P S[®]

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Volume 1

PYRAMID[™]

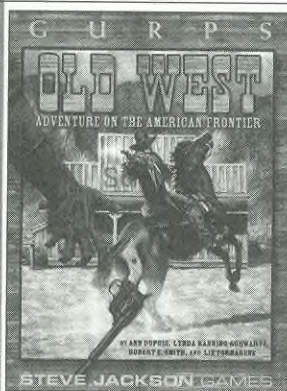


Campaign Settings,
Optional Rules,
and Adventures
from *Pyramid Magazine*

STEVE JACKSON GAMES

ADVENTURE BEYOND COMPARE

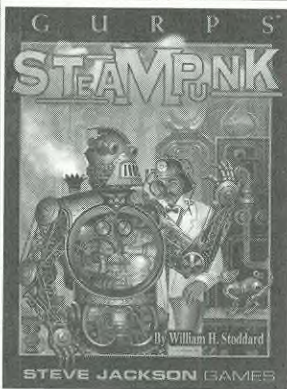
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GURPS Old West

The American frontier was a legend, even as it was happening. Gunfighters, Indians, cowboys, miners, and mountain men . . . the “rust-eaters” who pushed the rails west . . . the Pony Express . . . the Texas Rangers, and the outlaws they fought . . . the settlers battling fire, floods, stampedes, and sickness . . . their adventures made the nation what it is today!

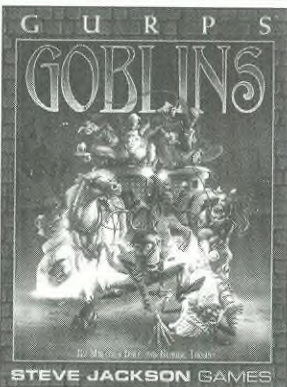
Come west if you’ve got the guts for it. The weak die on the trail, and the cowards never leave home. *Let’s see what you’re made of, pardner . . .*



GURPS Steampunk

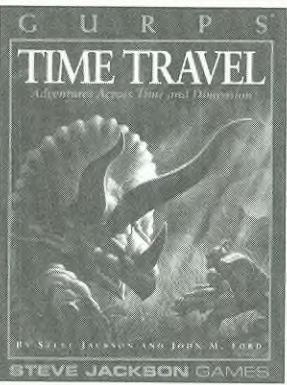
GURPS Steampunk combines the mood of cyberpunk with the setting of an alternate Industrial Age, where computers run on steam power, walking colossi stalk the battlefields, flying ironclads rule the skies, and science is the new frontier.

Whether your destination is 20,000 leagues under the sea or into space to hear the music of the spheres, *GURPS Steampunk* can get you there.



GURPS Goblins

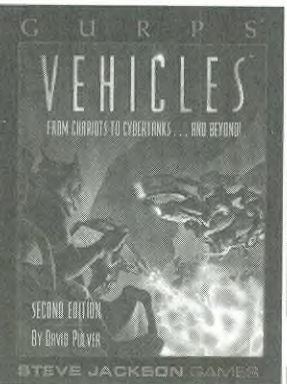
GURPS Goblins is set in a city, where every square inch has been trod by one and a half million pairs of feet, and all obstacles are marked on a handy street map. The ruins and dungeons are far from uncharted – the only creature who never explores them is the landlord who rents them out. A low-power campaign with a twisted sense of humor!



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The second edition streamlines the design process, using the design order found in *GURPS Robots*, also by David Pulver.

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GURPS®

BEST OF PYRAMID™

Volume 1

Compiled by Steven Marsh
and Philip Reed

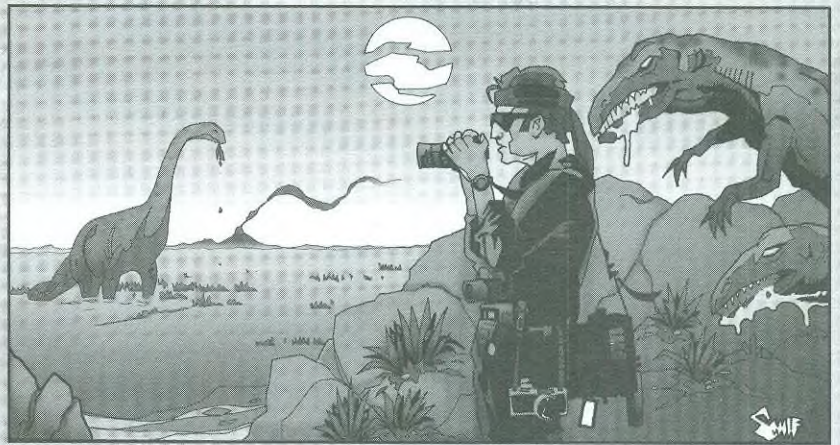
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ISBN 1-55634-494-5

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STEVE JACKSON GAMES

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ABOUT GURPS

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of the *GURPS* system. Our address is SJ Games, Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) any time you write us! Resources now available include:

Pyramid (www.sjgames.com/pyramid). Our online magazine includes new rules and articles for *GURPS*. It also covers the hobby's top games – *Dungeons & Dragons*, *Traveller*, *World of Darkness*, *Call of Cthulhu*, *Shadowrun*, and many more – and other Steve Jackson Games releases like *In Nomine*, *INWO*, *Car Wars*, *Toon*, *Ogre*, and more. And *Pyramid* subscribers also have access to playtest files online, to see (and comment on) new books before they're released.

New supplements and adventures. *GURPS* continues to grow, and we'll be happy to let you know what's new. A current catalog is available for an SASE. Or check out our Web site (below).

Errata. Everyone makes mistakes, including us – but we do our best to fix our errors. Up-to-date errata sheets for all *GURPS* releases, including this book, are always available from SJ Games; be sure to include an SASE with your request. Or download them from the Web – see below.

Q&A. We do our best to answer any game question accompanied by an SASE.

Gamer input. We value your comments. We will consider them, not only for new products, but also when we update this book on later printings!

Internet. Visit us on the World Wide Web at www.sjgames.com for an online catalog, errata, updates, and hundreds of pages of information. We also have conferences on CompuServe and AOL. *GURPS* has its own Usenet group, too: rec.games.frp.gurps.

GURPSnet. Much of the online discussion of *GURPS* happens on this e-mail list. To join, send mail to majordomo@io.com with "subscribe GURPSnet-L" in the body, or point your World Wide Web browser to gurpsnet.sjgames.com/.

The *GURPS Best of Pyramid* page is at www.sjgames.com/gurps/books/pyramid1.

PAGE REFERENCES

See *GURPS Compendium I*, p. 181, for a list of abbreviations for *GURPS* titles, or for the most recent list, visit our Web site at www.sjgames.com/gurps/abbrevs.html.

Page references that begin with a B refer to the *GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition Revised*; e.g., p. B22 refers to page 22 of the *Basic Set*.

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INTRODUCTION

Approximately five thousand years ago the first pyramids were built in Egypt. Working tirelessly under the hot Egyptian sun, tens of thousands of skilled laborers constructed these amazing monuments to time.

“Whew! Thank goodness *that’s* done,” a worker would say as he finished polishing the last piece of limestone before slumping to the ground in exhausted satisfaction. “Excellent!” the pharaoh would exclaim. “Now you must construct . . . *another* pyramid!”

Fast forward to June, 1993.

Working tirelessly under the hot Austin, Texas sun, a handful of skilled laborers constructed the first issue of *Pyramid Magazine*, an amazing bimonthly monument to the fun of gaming.

“Whew! Thank goodness *that’s* done,” a worker would say as he finished typesetting the last article before slumping to the floor in exhausted satisfaction.

“Excellent!” Steve would exclaim. “How’s issue two looking?”

Pyramid has always been dedicated to “The Best in Gaming.” We believe that and strive to meet this lofty ideal; from the beginning we’ve endeavored *not* to be a house organ. But *GURPS* has always held a special place in our hearts, too . . . and not just because of the solid gold ingots the Hidden Masters provide for furthering *their* goals. So when we had the opportunity to publish some of the best *GURPS* material from the paper days of *Pyramid* into a somewhat more “permanent” form, we thought it was a good idea. Because, paradoxically, *Pyramid* publishes material that is both too odd to include in most books, yet is too good, useful, and *fun* to remain in an ephemeral form.

Pyramid is a wonderful opportunity for us to publish material that otherwise can’t quite justify a full rulebook. Sure, there’s interest in, say, *GURPS Horror*,

but there *probably* isn’t as much interest in *GURPS Really Cheesy Fun Horror of Ineffectual Evil*. We also get to publish support for games that won’t get another book anytime soon, like *Goblins*, *Atomic Horror*, or *Warehouse 23*. And, in staying true to *GURPS’* generic roots, we are able to run a lot of articles that would be useful to many different campaigns, like “Willful Weapons” and “Low-Tech Economies.”

As the current editor of *Pyramid*, I have the pleasurable job of sifting through all the really good articles I receive in order to pick out the best ones. When I’m trying to decide what goes into the magazine, I’m generally drawn to those that trigger some sort of “Wow!” reaction in me.

Each of the articles reprinted in this book satisfies that condition, and then some:

Pulp-era heroes trapped in the Cretaceous era against a futuristic fascist foe.

Magical tattoos that transform into animal companions.

An alternate timeline where Richard Nixon is responsible for colonizing Mars.

And so on. For me, part of the fun of a publication (and a compilation, like this book) is the wonder of juxtaposition. When you’re reading pieces by different writers about a variety of subjects, you can’t *help* but crisscross ideas in your mind. What if a sinister weapon waited amid the evil of Trespasser’s Isle, coaxing those who drew too near to take it, hold it, kill? How would the Knights Templar react to a large metal winged wagon that inexplicably flew under its own power, yet could contract to the size of a rock? What’s the story behind Nixon’s tattoo? And, of course, being *GURPS*, it’s trivial to cross games and boundaries to answer those questions.

We’ve divided this book into three sections: Settings, Optional Rules, and Adventures. The bounds are somewhat

nebulous; some of the adventures and rules contain a fair amount of setting, the settings and adventures contain some rules, etc. But it’s useful to have designations, if for no other reason than to keep from reading the entire book in one sitting. When appropriate, we’ve updated articles to new edition rules and references. We deny the inclusion of any additional subliminal material.


If you like this book (as we hope you do), we already have plans for additional volumes; you’ll get to see the articles that lost the coin toss to be included in this book. And, of course, fans of the paper and electronic version of *Pyramid* are encouraged to pick up *Murphy’s Rules* and both *Suppressed Transmission* volumes.

In 1998, after 30 bimonthly issues, *Pyramid* joined the 21st Century and became exclusively an Internet publication.

Instead of producing an issue every two months, we were able to release quality material every *week* . . . at a substantially reduced cost. We produce approximately 60,000 words a month (more in months with five Fridays), and provide message boards, chat rooms, and playtest material to our readers at no additional cost. And I get the ego trip of having a weekly column, *Random Thought Table*. We have more subscribers now than we ever did in our paper days, and we’re able to release material (like news and reviews) faster than a dead trees edition ever could. And, of course, we deliver *lots* of new and different *GURPS* material.

Every week we labor to bring the Best in Gaming to our readers. And every Thursday before midnight Austin time, we finish the magazine, breathing a sigh of relief as another new issue is launched into the void of cyberspace. “Thank goodness *that’s* done,” we exclaim to each other in the chat room

“Excellent!” Steve exclaims. “So . . . What’s coming up next week?”



The backbone of any good roleplaying game, the setting is where all the action happens. From Alternate Earths to Alternate Yrths, *Pyramid* has presented some of the most creative backgrounds ever to grace a handful of pages. Use these ideas alone, or to add spice to an existing campaign.

Pyramid in no way assumes responsibility should you decide to try a *Time Travel Fantasy Old West Vehicles* campaign . . . but it should be fun.

SETTING

MORE TIMELINES FOR GURPS TIME TRAVEL

BY THOMAS CRON

The best part of gaming the alternate worlds campaign of *GURPS Time Travel* is inventing alternate timelines for the campaign. History is so stuffed with turning points that gamers can play the game for decades and never use the same world twice. What's more, if a Game Master wants to use an "if" of history again, he can simply generate a different alternate history. This practice has worked in print; witness the numerous victorious-Nazis stories that have come out in the last 50 years, no two alike. Each person's idea of the results of an altered event is unique, like a fingerprint. This makes the game all the more fascinating.

The following timelines were discovered by Infinity Unlimited explorers and researchers in the year 2016.

Technate

This world is definitely one to keep an eye on. On this Quantum 5 timeline, Imperial Germany had better tactics and communications in 1914-16, winning World War I and stamping its rule on all of Europe and Africa. The Czar managed to keep Russia out of the war and put down the Bolsheviks in 1917. The second major change was the greater success of the Technocrat movement of the 1920s. The Technocrats advocated government by scientists according to scientific principles, and managed to overthrow the U.S. government in 1926, setting up a new nation, the American Technate.

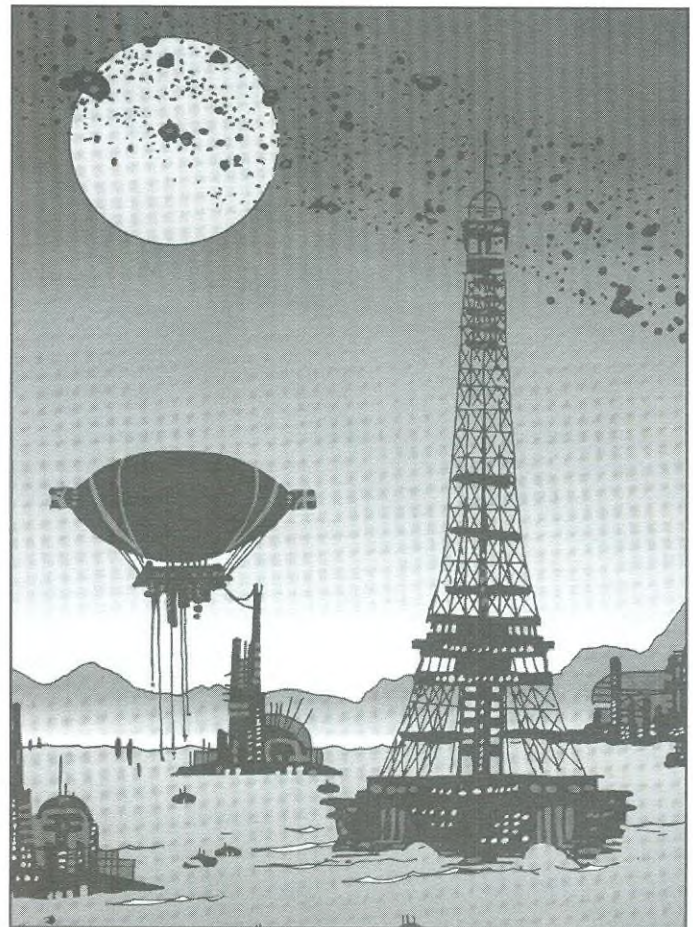
The Technocrats set about developing their technology, and the Kaiser of Germany soon followed suit. By 1935, jet aircraft were being tested in the Technate; the first controlled nuclear reaction was achieved in Baltimore in 1940; the first computer was built in 1943 and all American homes boasted one by 1960. The laser was invented in Los Angeles in 1948. The joint Technate-German lunar mission of 1966 established colonies on the moon. The other nations simply copied the technology of the Technate and Germany, with little innovation of their own; one exception was Japan's achievement of a magnetic-levitation train system in the late 1960s.

Surprisingly, this timeline is relatively peaceful. After the Russian Imperial family fell from power in 1927, a conservative Menshevik government took over, establishing a republic

that is still struggling to feed its people. China remains a collection of warring states, those parts of it not run by Japan. Most nations are content to follow the lead of the Technate and Germany, and since these two powers are allies, they've seen no need to develop nuclear weapons. (There are nuclear-powered cars and airplanes, however!)

The problem is, either power could be tempted to try conquest if it discovers the existence of alternate timelines. Infinity scientists estimate that the Technate or Germany or both could build their own conveyor within a year, if they came by one of ours.

This timeline is in its year 1991, and is at Tech Level 10.



Albany

UN peacemakers were overjoyed by the discovery of this Quantum 5 timeline. There, Benjamin Franklin's Albany Plan of Union was accepted by the British and colonial governments in 1754. By the end of 1755, the 13 colonies were united under a Grand Council, and by 1757 both Britain and the colonies were benefiting from the arrangement. The Revolution was averted, the Indians kept more of their lands, and the great empires stayed intact. These empires kept the peace; when Prussia tried conquering Europe in 1910, it was swiftly defeated. Technology advanced faster; for example, Thomas Edison invented radio and the airship in the 1880s. The world is currently at TL9.

Albany is in its year 1965 and is still at peace. Teams of U.N. observers are on this world, hoping to learn how to end war on Homeline.

Moonstrike

This Quantum 6 timeline experienced an unusual disaster in 1195: an asteroid the approximate size of Texas slammed into the moon and destroyed it. The shattered moon became a ring encircling the Earth, while the asteroid, deflected by the impact, hit Mars.

The moonstrike was seen by millions and the effects on man's religious and political life were staggering. The Church was hard-pressed to explain the disaster, and many splinter sects emerged; the Reformation came three centuries early. Since the tides were now gone, seamen and scientists had to team up to work out ways to compensate. More people studied science, and the Scientific Renaissance came early. The European peoples discovered the Americas in the late 14th century and colonized them, though the British got Florida and the Spanish got Canada. This world is in its year 1985 and is at TL8.

Waldensia

The discovery of this Quantum 3 timeline caused much comment among Homeline's religious communities. There, the Waldenses, Peter Waldo's followers who believed the simple life to be best, fled Europe for North America when they were excommunicated by Pope Lucius III in 1184. They landed on Long Island, built their first major city on Manhattan Island, befriended the Amerinds, and invited other, less fortunate, Europeans to join them. Thousands of commoners did so, and criminals, unwanted nobles' sons and others made their way to the continent most called Waldensland. By 1450, an Amerind-European union called the United Peoples of Waldensland had formed. The European powers attempted to conquer the continent in several wars between 1470 and 1550, but failed. The U.P.W. is the world's greatest power now, in its year 1968.

Because the Waldenses valued peace and the simple life over technology, their science is still at TL4; however, the U.P.W. is one of the most civilized cultures Infinity has yet seen. The Catholic Church of Homeline is having to think hard over the question of how heretics could have succeeded

so well on Waldensia. The Protestant denominations are pleased at the heretics' success, while the Jewish community is pleased to notice that the Jews and Christians of Waldensland co-exist in peace. It's quite likely that both religions on Homeline will benefit from the lessons of Waldensia.

Christian China

This Quantum 6 timeline resulted from a change of career for Marco Polo; he became a priest and missionary instead of a merchant. He persuaded the Khan of China to send for 50 missionaries; they came, and succeeded in converting the entire empire to Christianity.

The effects on history of a Christian, capitalistic Chinese empire were incredible. Medieval European society was shaken and enlightened by the influx of Chinese goods and ideas, while European contact changed centuries-old traditions and lifestyles in China. The Vatican changed, becoming more tolerant; as a result, the abuses that led to the Reformation were corrected and Martin Luther remained an obscure monk, albeit one who helped Chinese immigrants settle in Germany. The Black Plague was stopped in a few months, so tens of millions of Europeans lived longer. Technology advanced faster, with the Scientific Revolution starting around 1400. Chinese ships discovered the Americas in 1438 and the Amerinds were regarded as human beings; thus, no race wars resulted. By 1700, Earth's political map was unrecognizable, and its civilization radically different from Homeline's in the same year.

This world is in its year 1979, and it is at TL9.

Pogo

Timelines where creatures other than man developed sapience and civilization are becoming better-known; the United States of Lizardia is one such, as are the other dinosaur-populated lines. Snoopy, in Quantum 4, is populated by sapient, humanoid dogs, while Jumbo, on Quantum 5, is ruled by civilized elephants whose society is based on the herd mentality.

Still, the discovery of this Quantum 3 timeline set people back on their heels. This world is ruled by sapient, man-sized opossums who have built a forest-centered, family-oriented, and relatively peaceful civilization. It is in its year 1950 and its science is at TL6. The discovery of Pogo and other animal-dominated timelines has made people realize that man is not the only intelligent being in the multiverse, and this fact is having a profound effect on Homeline's religions, culture, and science.

Null-Pasteur

This Quantum 5 timeline resulted from a tragic event in 1828 France. The six-year-old Louis Pasteur was bitten by a rabid dog and died three months later. From this private tragedy sprang a world of 1970 much different from Homeline in the same year.

Without Pasteur, bacteriology as a science never went anywhere; the use of antiseptics in the operating room never

caught on; rabies was never cured; pasteurization was never invented; and no way to prevent anthrax and cholera in animals was discovered. Hundreds of thousands of people died between 1880 and 1910 whose counterparts on Homeline lived, and plagues swept the world repeatedly in the 20th century. A devastating series of influenza, cholera, and plague epidemics ended World War I in 1917. A series of similar plagues ended a very different World War II in 1951. Since then, man has struggled with the problem of controlling disease, and when Null-Pasteur's plight was made known to the people of Homeline, they embarked on a mission to save the people of that Parallel. U.N. doctors are secretly introducing modern medical techniques to Null-Pasteur, and some success is already being seen. Significantly, there was very little protest to this mission of mercy.

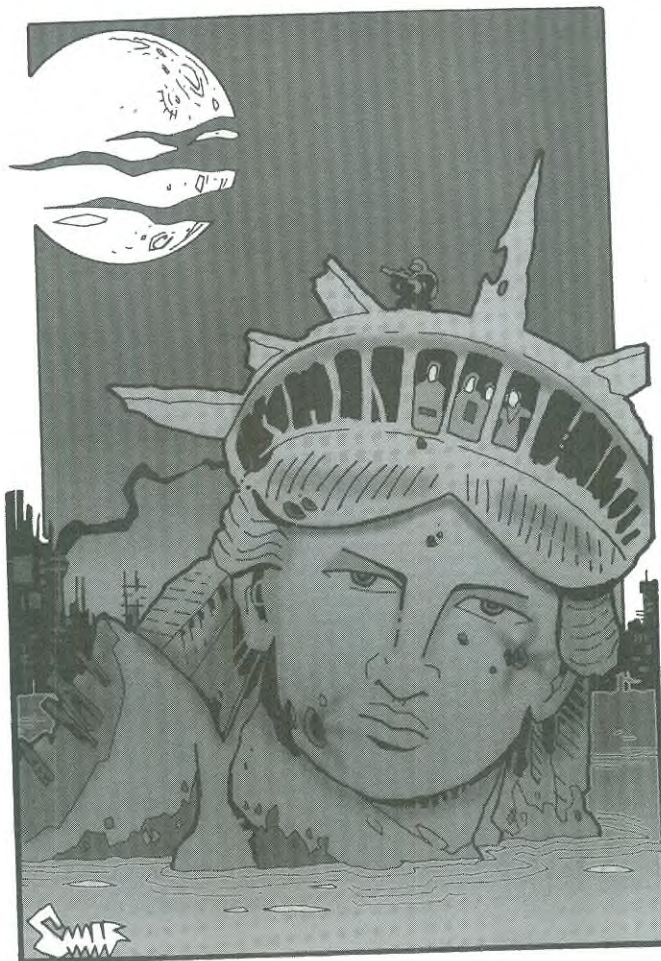
Null-Pasteur is still at Tech Level 5.

Macedonia-Weird

The existence of this Quantum 3 timeline offers proof that history and humanity

can take some very strange paths. Here, Alexander the Great survived malaria in 323 B.C. and went on to conquer Rome, Carthage and China. His descendents colonized the Americas, unified the Amerinds, wrote the ultimate encyclopedia and built steam-powered vehicles. By 1400, a world Macedonian state existed.

It was about 1500 that things started getting weird. A cadre of officers took over the Macedonian moon colonies in that year and seceded from Earth. The development of near-sentient computers in the 1540s resulted in the formation of an illegal underground organization called the Technos Legion, dedicated to a rule by scientists. The similarity of the Legion to the rulers of Centrum is frightening. An eccentric genius, Arelo Destos, reputed to be a member of the Alexandrian royal family, achieved an engine capable of pushing a spaceship to three-fourths the speed of light in 1589, and the Great Colonization began.



Hundreds of thousands of Earthlings colonized hundreds of worlds, enlarging the Macedonian Empire to a mind-boggling size. This in turn led to the Earth-Jazdan War of 1620-1642, an interstellar war with the fascist Jazdan Empire, a race of insectoid aliens. The war ended with a cease-fire. A new complication to a very complicated culture was added in 1710 with the founding of the Institute for Psychic Studies – a school that taught its students how to harness psychic and psionic powers. By 1740, thousands of people were using psi powers.

By 1805, the Macedonian civilization was at TL13 and very aggressive under its arrogant ruler, Alexander XXXX. That was the year the Lunar Republic, aided by the Jazdans, nuked Earth with over 400 nuclear warheads. Civilization was destroyed and the Lunans and Jazdans divided the planet between them, each planning to betray the other when expedient. The Jazdans were wiped out with a genetically engineered virus in 1866, leaving the Lunans in control of the Earth. Today – the current year is 1996 – Earth is a wasteland inhabited by mutants, psi-powered descendents of survivors, animals

evolving sapience and the still-extant Technos Legion. Current Tech Level is 5 for the Earthlings and 13 for the Lunans.

Needless to say, this timeline is off-limits to everybody but the highest echelons of Infinity and the I-Cops. If any of the disparate peoples of Macedonia-Weird get hold of a conveyor, they would have their own within a year. What's more, some of the mutants and psis might develop world-jumping powers. This Quantum 4 timeline is a major headache for Homeline.

Emperor Burr

This Quantum 3 timeline nearly caused the breakdown of Mexican-American relations when it was discovered. On this alternate, currently in its year 1945, Aaron Burr succeeded in becoming emperor of Mexico in 1806, styling himself Aaron I. President Jefferson was unable to get support for a war to stop Burr. Burr's ambitions grew; he annexed the entire west coast in 1812, the Rockies in 1816, and most of Central America by 1824. Mexican aid to the British led to a stalemate in

the War of 1812; President Madison was forced to sign a humiliating peace treaty in 1816 that allowed the United States to remain independent, but as an inferior trading partner to the British Empire.

American history followed a much different path because of Burr's empire. The presence of Aaron III's expansionist Mexico kept the south from seceding, but slave revolts in the 1870s led to the freeing of the slaves in 1880, and most of the slaves were shipped off to Africa. The Amerinds, trusted allies of the Burr family, remained powerful in the west. Under Presidents Robert Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt, the United States developed its own overseas empire between 1885 and 1910, annexing the Philippines in 1899 and Hawaii in 1902. Europe remained monarchical, the world wars were averted, and President Charles Evans Hughes founded the Allied Nations in 1920. Tech Level for most of this Earth is 6; there are no nuclear weapons, but no space travel or television either.

The Mexican government of Homeline claimed that the existence of Emperor Burr was proof that the United States has always wanted to take Mexico for its own. Both the U.S. government and Infinity are busy combatting this belief.

Vinland

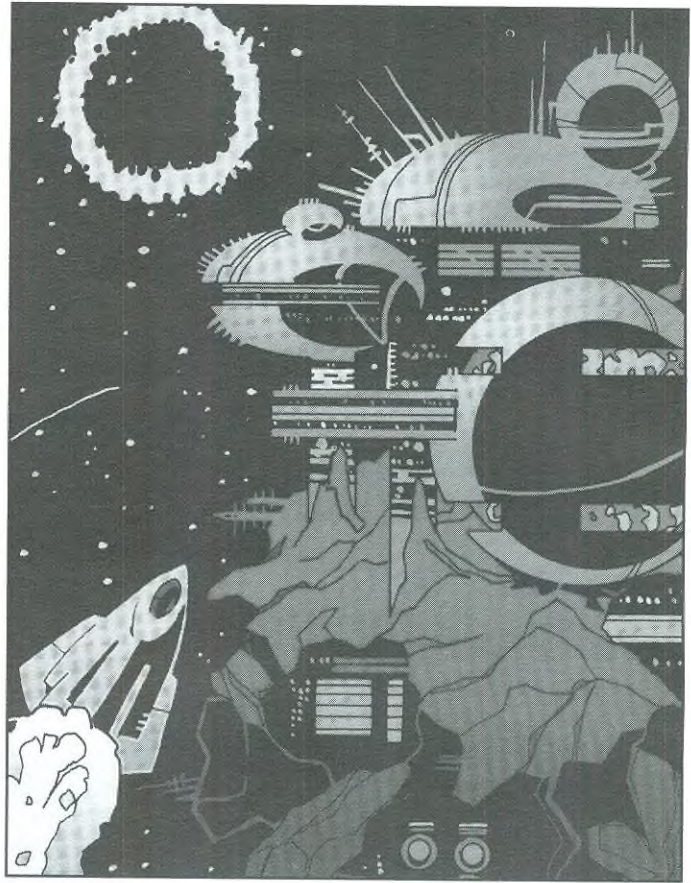
This Quantum 5 timeline resulted from the Viking Bjarni Herjolfsson landing in North America in 986 A.D., something he didn't do on Homeline. He liked what he saw and brought settlers there a year later. The colonies survived and over the next 50 years the European peoples immigrated to the New World: Saxons, Normans, Vikings, Romans, Jutes, Germans – all of them. The new Americans pushed the Amerinds westward, spilling a lot of blood in the process. By 1200, European colonies covered everything east of the Appalachians.

The Mongols invaded North America in 1297 from the west and swept to the Hengalb (Mississippi) River, crushing the Amerinds and providing the European-Americans with their ultimate challenge. The wars lasted over two centuries and the Mongols were finally pushed to the Rocky Mountains. The Europeans had domesticated the bison and invented gunpowder and reliable guns during the war. The current year is 1985, and the continent is still divided between the Europeans and the Mongols.

St. Paul's Russia

The discovery of this Quantum 4 timeline did much to ease the discomfort felt by many Christians over the success of the heretics of Waldensia. On this new timeline St. Paul traveled, not westward to the Roman Empire or eastward to the Orient, but northward to Russia. He brought Christianity to the Vikings, Slavs, Bulgars, Avars, Goths, Khazars, and Huns who inhabited the territory. He journeyed all over Russia and Scandinavia, and by 200 A.D. most of those lands were firmly Christian.

The results of this change were staggering. The Roman Empire was not Christianized until the late fourth century and lasted until the eighth. Russian missionaries converted first the Chinese and then the Amerinds of western North America, a Russian named Ivan Molodovo having discovered the continent in 1066. Europe remained primitive longer; it was not Christianized until the early 1700s. The Africans and Incas joined forces while the Aztecs conquered much of North America. The Saxons of England discovered Newfoundland in 1758 and established a colony that lasted until the Plague Year



of 1838. The current year is 1910; Russia is TL6, Europe TL4, and the Aztecs TL5.

Many Christians on Homeline believed that St. Paul's Russia was proof that God shapes the course of history on the alternate Earths, and many at Infinity think they may be right. The Vatican and most Protestant denominations in Europe and America are studying the controversy, hoping to learn from it.

Lightbend

This is one of the weirdest timelines yet discovered. Located in Quantum 7, this line has different physical laws; in short, light waves bend and change direction, almost as though they were alive and sentient. Taylor Mallory, the explorer who discovered Lightbend, understandably thought he had gone insane until his conveyor instruments showed that the sun's rays really were bending.

Infinity researchers are trying to find out how the bizarre behavior of light rays is connected to the fact that the humans of this line are still in the Bronze Age, at Tech Level 1. The current year is 1322; this world has been classified as an "anomaly" world and set aside for scientific study.

Trotsky

This Quantum 4 timeline presents a great danger to Homeline; its greatest power is a Communist Soviet Union that covers all of Eurasia and most of North Africa. This is the result of Leon Trotsky defeating Joseph Stalin after Lenin's death in 1924 and becoming the master of Russia. Trotsky

built up the nation's economy, subsidized scientific research, encouraged works of pro-government (but otherwise free) literature, and made treaties with the United States and other nations. He refused to deal with Hitler; instead he launched his own blitzkrieg upon Germany in May 1938. Germany was crushed and Hitler was executed. By 1945, Trotsky had conquered all of Europe while America, feeling betrayed, could only stand by in helpless rage.

The United States under President Robert Taft founded the Alliance Against Communism in 1948, and most of the world's free nations joined. Trotsky's Russia achieved jet aircraft by 1947, a computer by 1950 and landed on the moon in 1958. By the 1980s America was technologically outstripped by the Russians. Trotsky died of cancer in 1978, and his sons now rule the empire. The current year is 1998.

The problem is that Infinity agents report that scientists in the Soviet Union are working on a crosstime conveyor. The spectre of an aggressive, TL10 Communist superstate loose in the multiverse is a frightening one, to say the least. Infinity has its hands full trying to stop the Russian project without being discovered itself.

Kirby

Infinity researchers and explorers have found some weird parallels before, but none as weird as Kirby. Even the United States of Lizardia and Bizarro can't compare with this Quantum 5 timeline. This world experienced "Edison's War" of 1900-1908, a conflict started when a Russian-German-Austrian Axis attacked the rest of Europe and the United States. Thomas Edison, Alexander Graham Bell and other inventors built hovercraft, machine guns, tanks, airships and other technological wonders, and the Allies defeated the Axis with them. Once the war was over and President Theodore Roosevelt's League of Free Nations was in place, the world's people lauded and honored its scientists and inventors.

As the people embraced technology, interest in science fiction exploded. By 1915, over 50 SF magazines were being published in the United States alone, including one edited by Edison and six edited by Hugo Gernsback. Every writer in the United States tried his hand at the genre; for example, Gertrude Stein's *Stars Like a River* won a Pulitzer in 1938. By 1940, people were thinking that all the technology seen in the SF magazines should be built, and the scientists agreed. 1943 saw the first moon landing; computers were developed by 1945 and were made small enough for the average man to afford by 1955; atomic-powered spaceplanes were first used in 1950; a Channel Tunnel was finished in 1960; and genetic engineering was common by 1965. U.S. Presidents Franklin Roosevelt, Joseph Kennedy, Jr., Robert Kennedy, and John Glenn put millions of dollars at the scientists' disposal, and they used it all.

By 1968, the American and European moon colonies were self-supporting; in 1970, the first Martian colonies were founded. The laser rifle was invented in 1973; the robot exoskeleton was invented in 1976 and used to give the handi-

capped mobility; an FTL drive was achieved in 1981. Fusion reactors and solar satellites were providing Earth with most of its power by 1985. A sentient computer, dubbed Superbrain by its inventors, went on-line in December 1987. Cloning of humans was common by 1995. Fortunately, no one seems to have tried building a crosstime conveyor, but sooner or later someone inspired by an SF magazine will try. This world is at tech level 14; the current year is 2000. Infinity named this world after its greatest SF comics creator, Jack Kirby.

The Infinity Council is unsure what to do with Kirby. The people there are largely peaceful, channelling their aggression through games and scientific achievement, but if they were to develop a crosstime conveyor, they could unintentionally harm less advanced worlds. The discovery of the untouched timelines might corrupt some of the Kirbyans and get them to take over. Worse, their technology could fall into the wrong hands – imagine Reich 5 or Centrum getting their hands on a tachyon rifle. All Infinity can do is keep hands off, send in agents to learn the science, and hope Centrum doesn't discover Kirby. It's a major worry.

Spacenixon

Detractors of former U.S. President Richard Nixon were more than a little surprised when this Quantum 6 timeline was discovered. There, President Nixon decided in 1969 to send an expedition to Mars on the heels of the moon landing. Congress went along, and Eugene A. Cernan set foot on Mars on October 28, 1972.

The United States public went wild for space exploration after this achievement. The first American moon colony, Goddard City, was founded in 1973, and the Soviet Union followed suit in 1974. Martian colonies were established in the late 1970s; the American space station America I went up in 1978; and robot probes landed on Jupiter and Saturn in 1981. Scientific advances came faster as science became the preferred career for many young people in America. Cancer was cured in 1982, a magnetic-levitation train system was built in the United States in 1985, and undersea colonies were founded by 1990. The political history of the United States changed. The Watergate scandal never happened; Vice-President Gerald Ford was elected President in 1976, Ronald Reagan in 1980 and 1984, and Jack Kemp in 1988. The Democratic Party finally put Jerry Brown in the White House in 1992, largely on his promise of more technology for the common man, but the party is losing much of its old power and smaller parties are waiting to take over.

This world is at Tech Level 9, and the current year is 1999. Infinity would like to learn Spacenixon's space science without giving anyone there knowledge of crosstime travel.

When you're dealing with alternate history, anything is possible, and when you've got hundreds, maybe thousands, of alternate timelines to work with, you're really cooking. As long as gamers are interested in history and its might-have-beens, there will be plenty of material for the Alternate Worlds Campaign of *GURPS Time Travel*.

SPROCKETS

By Chris W.
McCubbin and
Craig Sheeley

Based on an original idea
by Derek Percy

An Alternate-Present Campaign for *GURPS Vehicles*

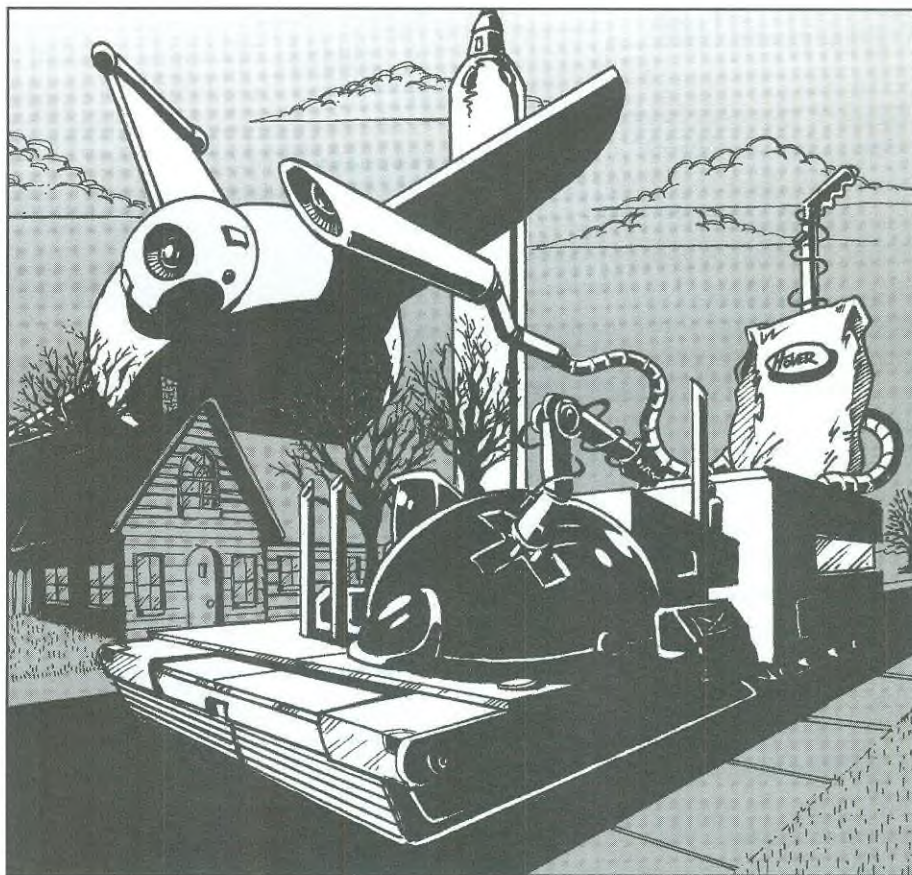


The first confirmed sprocketfall occurred on Oct. 20, 1983, at 9:15 p.m., on Howard Nernst's farm three miles northwest of Columbus, Nebraska. Nernst was driving his combine home after finishing his annual harvest when he observed a meteor-like object fall out of the sky. He thought it had landed in one of his newly-harvested fields but, exhausted from a 16-hour work day, he postponed further investigation until the next day.

On the morning of the 21st, Nernst returned to the field where he believed the object to have struck. The impact site was easy to find in the barren, newly-harvested field. It was a shallow crater four feet deep and seven feet wide. At the bottom of the crater was an irregular metallic solid about six inches across. Nernst at first believed that the object was the metallic core of a meteor, but when he picked it up he found its weight and texture more like light plastic.

The object was cool and light (about 20 ounces) and Nernst picked it up and dusted it off. Its surface had a low metallic sheen, except for one small protrusion with a darker discoloration. Nernst wet his thumb and rubbed it briskly across the protrusion, trying to determine if the discoloration was a stain, or an intrinsic irregularity. This firm pressure from Nernst's thumb caused the object to move and expand in his hands. Prudently, he dropped the object and sprinted several yards away.

When Nernst turned around, the small metallic object was gone, and in its place was a strange looking tracked vehicle, the approximate size of a 2-1/2-ton truck. Nernst approached the vehicle and examined it. The two tracks were flexible, but not articulated in any way Nernst – a certified mechanic – could identify. The back half of the vehicle consisted of an open-topped cargo bay seven feet long, six feet wide and five feet deep. At various points on the outside of the vehicle were a number of tubes, springs and gear mechanisms whose



function he could not identify at all. At the rear of the vehicle was a gate leading to the cargo bay. The gate appeared to slide down into the interior of the vehicle. At the front of the vehicle was a single sliding door leading to the cockpit. Although the exterior of the cockpit appeared opaque, from the inside the entire front was transparent as glass, providing nearly a full 180-degree arc of vision. The cockpit could seat three comfortably. Just inside the cockpit door was a protrusion identical to the one which had triggered the change. Suspecting (correctly, as it turned out) that touching this again would reverse the transformation, Nernst left it alone for the moment.

The "control panel" was located in the center of the cockpit, and consisted of a series of pressure-plate-like surfaces. Touching one of the surfaces in a way that seemed merely logical at the time, the vehicle moved ahead through the field, moving smoothly on its treads over the newly harvested rows. With what he later realized was preternatural quickness, Nernst

learned how to accelerate, decelerate, steer and reverse the vehicle (when he placed the vehicle in reverse, a section of the "windshield" darkened, then cleared to show what Nernst realized was a reduced image of the view from the vehicle's rear). Experimentation revealed that the vehicle had a maximum speed of 81.7 mph on straight highway, and that it could negotiate an incline of almost 45 degrees. Its treads could carry it effortlessly over a vertical obstacle up to 18 inches tall, or a crevasse up to five feet wide. It appeared to need no fuel or coolant whatsoever. The vehicle could pull a load in excess of 10 tons, though it weighed less than one ton. It took the sprocket approximately 12 seconds to shift to vehicular form, a few seconds less to shift back. Perhaps most remarkably, any harm due to minor scrapes, bumps or collisions appeared to *repair itself* if the vehicle was left inactive, in either form, for a few hours.

Today, nearly a decade after finding his sprocket, Howard Nernst is still using it for hauling on his farm.

Sprocketfall

In the 12 months following Howard Nernst's initial discovery, about 300 sprockets were found worldwide (and the term "sprocket" was coined when the press became aware of the phenomenon). In the 12 months following that, almost 1,000 more sprockets were found. The pace of the sprocketfall steadily accelerated for the next several years, but for the last five years it appears to have stabilized at 12,000 to 15,000 units a year, worldwide. According to official U.S. Government estimates, approximately 125,000 sprockets have been found in the last decade. This may seem like a lot, but it should be remembered that this represents less than one sprocket for every 40,000 humans. If the earth's population and the rate of sprocketfall remained stable, it would still take half a million years before everybody on earth had a sprocket of their own.

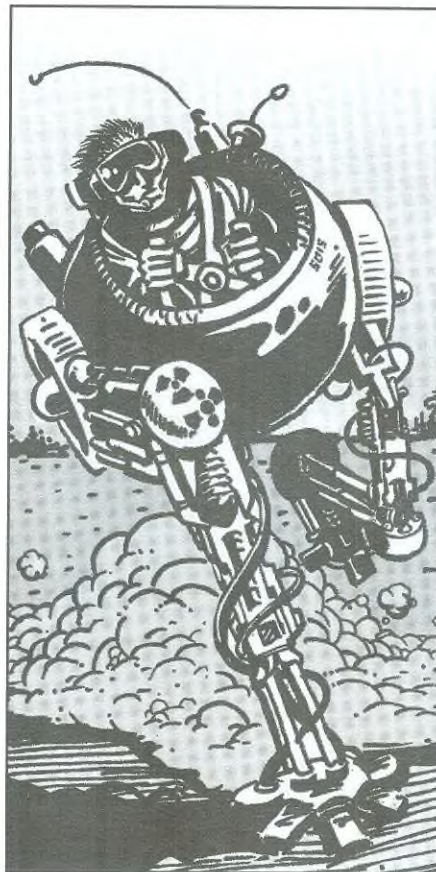
All sprocketfalls seem to follow the pattern set by Farmer Nernst's experience. Originating from some point outside the earth's atmosphere, sprockets fall to earth like meteors. A visible protrusion, discoloration or both will mark the trigger of the newly-fallen sprocket. The first person to key a sprocket's transformation (*not* necessarily the first person to handle the sprocket) will find himself almost intuitively able to pilot the resulting vehicle. Those who try to learn to operate the sprocket later will find it a much more difficult process.

The global scientific community's study of sprockets has been extensive and largely frustrating. Although there are a multitude of theories, nobody really *knows* how or why sprockets change, or why the first person to key the sprocket finds it so much easier to operate it. A few basic facts are known. The sprocket vehicle obtains its mass from a sub-molecular alteration of atmospheric gases, mostly hydrogen. The molecular

structure of sprocket-stuff is resistant to analysis, but many scientists believe that each individual sprocket is, in some sense, *a single molecule*. Although the wheels, tracks or legs of a land-sprocket will move freely while the vehicle is in operation, when the power is off the wheels, tracks or joints appear to fuse together with the hull – the sprocket becomes effectively one piece. When a sprocket is parked, it is *parked*.

Sprocket stuff is quite tough, and seems to have the capacity to regenerate damage. However, a sprocket *can* be damaged to the point where it will not transform or function, and beyond that to the point where it cannot regenerate. Once that second point is reached, a sprocket begins to *dissolve*, losing about one pound of mass per day, back to the component gases.

No two sprockets exactly alike have ever been found. There are wheeled sprockets, tracked sprockets, two-and four-legged walking sprockets, hover sprockets, sprocket ships and submarines. There are two



No two sprockets exactly alike have ever been found.

broad classes of sprocket fliers, called "floaters" and "flitters." Floaters can hover. Flitters must stay in constant motion, with a stall speed of 30 to 80 mph, but typically have a much higher top speed than a floater. Flitters also need some sort of runway to take off and land. There are also several unique examples of strange and exotic sprockets that correspond to no known human vehicle design. There are rumors of boring sprockets, capable of traveling through the earth's crust. If such vehicles exist, they are highly classified. No sprocket found so far will work outside the earth's atmosphere, since all sprockets so far require atmospheric gases for power.

Sprockets also, for the most part, look funny. A few are extremely sleek and futuristic, and some look like vehicles that could have been built here on Earth. But the vast majority are very odd in appearance, with bizarre protrusions, cogs, springs, flywheels, and other components out of a Rube Goldberg nightmare. All these strange components seem to be important to the sprocket's operation, but scientists have had no luck in determining how or why.

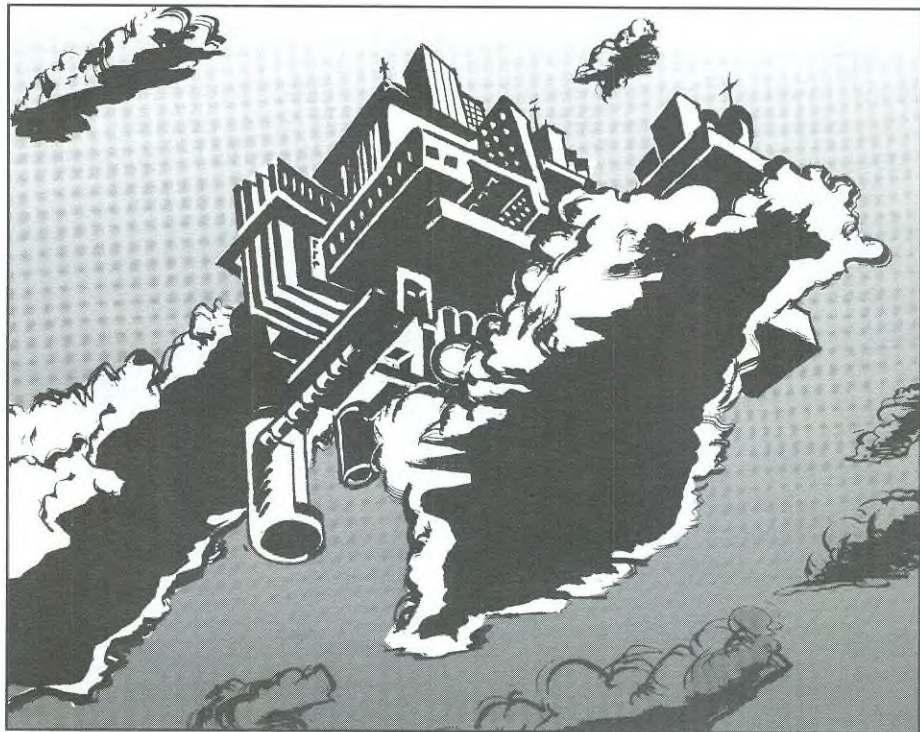
Tracked and submarine sprockets have an average top speed of 60 to 90 mph. Wheeled, hover and seagoing sprockets have an average top speed of 130 to 200 mph (the record top speed for a wheeled sprocket is 416 mph). Floater top speeds can range from 30 to 200 mph, and flitter top speed can range anywhere from 150 mph on up (the record airspeed for a sprocket is over Mach 5). Submarine sprockets usually have a maximum depth of 500 to 1,000 feet, though atypical specimens can reach the floor of the Challenger Deep (and have).

The smallest recorded sprocket vehicle is a one-man hover cycle weighing only 7.3 lbs. expanded, but capable of carrying a payload of up to 500 lbs. The largest is the floater dubbed *Cloud City*. With more than half a million cubic feet, the *Cloud City* is more than three times the size of its nearest competitor (the seagoing *Princess Diana*). Based out of Las Vegas, the *Cloud City* has been outfitted to serve as a combination casino and aerial cruise ship. In general, there seems to be little correlation between the size of the contracted sprocket and the size of the expanded vehicle, although the *Cloud City* was also the largest unexpanded sprocket ever found – about the size of a large suitcase.

The single greatest enigma about the sprockets is, of course, where do they come from? All available evidence suggests that they do not originate from any sort of fixed point on or above the earth, but seem to “just happen” somewhere between the Earth’s outer atmosphere and the edge of its gravity well. From there, they begin their long fall inward.

Scientists rapidly concluded that no modern terrestrial technology could produce the sprockets. The most common belief now is that the earth is being “seeded” with the sprockets for some unknown reason. Scientists now soberly debate whether the creators of the sprockets are more likely to turn out to be alien beings or time-traveling humans from earth’s future. A significant minority holds that the sprockets are a form of psychoactive extraterrestrial pseudo-life. Attracted to earth by its rich atmosphere, the sprocket takes its vehicular form from the subconscious mind of its triggerer.

One highly controversial theory regarding sprockets is the so-called “Nernst Effect,” which postulates that a sprocket somehow selects a master who is most likely to make use of its abilities, or perhaps configures itself to meet its master’s needs – just as Nernst, a farmer, found a



highly useful farm vehicle. Statistical evidence for the Nernst Effect is inconclusive – results depend entirely on how broadly one defines a sprocket’s usefulness. Certainly the Nernst Effect is not a universal – well-known counter-examples include the deep-sea submersible found by a Death Valley hermit, and the heavy earth mover found by a U.S. Navy ship at sea.

Sprocket Stuff

A newly-expanded sprocket has one function and one function only – it is a vehicle. Sprockets are almost never found with armament, galley or sanitary facilities, communications devices or even door locks – no extras not directly related to getting from point A to point B. Most sprockets will, however, have surfaces or enclosures where such extras can be conveniently installed or mounted.

At first, installation of extras in sprockets was a bit of a problem. It was almost impossible to penetrate the sprocket-stuff with mounting bolts, and when a bolt was successfully driven, the sprocket’s regenerative powers would just push it back out in a day or two. Eventually, how-

ever, it was discovered that by using nonferrous bolts in a low-intensity electromagnetic field, the sprocket stuff could be made more malleable, taking the bolt easily and retaining it once it was installed. This process has become known as “coaxing.” (Several national governments are believed to be researching possible application of the coaxing process to anti-sprocket weapons.)

If too many accessories are installed, however, the sprocket loses its ability to contract. If the sprocket’s cargo exceeds about 5% of its expanded weight, the sprocket can no longer change. Therefore, most installed extras are designed for easy removal. A long-range radio, for instance, weighing 50 lbs. or more, could be removed in about 10 minutes, leaving behind only its mounting plate and the plate’s bolts, both made of a lightweight plastic or alloy, weighing less than a pound. Within this weight limit, however, most installed extras appear to be completely unaffected by the transformation process (with the major exception that magnetic media like tapes and computer disks appear to lose their data if subjected to a sprocket change).

So far, nobody's been able to come up with a way to run an accessory off the sprocket's power source. Powered extras require a battery or some other energy source.

A sprocket will also refuse to change if it contains more than about an ounce of organic matter, be it animal or vegetable. Sprocket pilots soon condition themselves to remove all food and textiles from the sprocket before triggering the change.

Researchers have identified eight distinct elements which define an expanded sprocket. Three are universal, five are optional.

Hull

The hull of the sprocket generally defines its use. Does it have wheels, tracks, or wings? Is it streamlined, and if so, how much?

A typical sprocket hull has 25 DR and 30 HP (but see "Armor and Hardpoints," below). Any sprocket with an enclosed bottom is watertight. Any completely enclosed sprocket is airtight (this assumes, of course, that all exterior doors and vents are sealed).

Flitters usually have some sort of wing for lift and maneuverability; ground vehicles have tracks, wheels, or legs; seagoing sprockets often have an anchor of some type.

Power Nodes

The power node is the most important but least understood part of the sprocket, the very heart of the mystery.

On every sprocket there is a small solid area of exceptional toughness (at least 50 hit points and 100 DR, sometimes more). This area cannot be coaxed, and ranges in size from the approximate volume of a baseball to that of a 50-gallon drum. Researchers call this the "power node," and believe that it is the source of the sprocket's energy. In general, larger sprockets seem to require larger power nodes.

As near as anybody can figure out, power nodes convert atmospheric gases (or sometimes water, in aquatic sprockets) directly to kinetic energy. Sprockets don't have jets, propellers or drive shafts – they just seem to push themselves along over the ground or through the water or air.

Control Station

Every sprocket has a control station, consisting of the pilot's seat and the control panel proper. On the smallest one-man "scooters" the control station can be as simple as an open saddle and a steering handle, but normally it consists of a comfortable, adjustable contour chair and a dashboard-sized control panel consisting mostly of pressure plates. The control panel is always lit when the ambient light drops below a certain point.

Every function of sprocket operation can usually be performed from the control panel, with the notable exception of contraction – the contraction control is always found within reach of the entrance.

All sprockets so far require only one pilot, but a few of the very largest sprockets have been found with an extra, redundant control station, apparently as a safety feature.

Imaging and Navigation

The sensor and imaging capacity of sprockets varies greatly. An open, one-man scooter might have no more than a single "headlight" and a reflective surface to serve as a rearview mirror. Farmer Nernst's "truck" had its rear-view windscreen, 360-degree illumination, and a front spotlight.

On the other hand, a very fast flitter, or a very large ship, would typically have more complex capabilities, possibly including telescopic imaging, night vision, and radar- or sonar-like functions.

Sprockets do not, however, have intrinsic communications or long-range navigational aids – these must be added as accessories. They also

lack automatic pilots, and nobody has been able to develop a practical autopilot for any sort of sprocket.

Cargo and Passenger Areas

Most sprockets will have some sort of cargo area. This could be as small as an open depression the size of a wok, or as large as multiple enclosed cargo bays, each the size of a family home. Cargo areas open to the elements usually have some sort of drainage vents, which can be left open or closed (some seagoing sprockets have extremely efficient pumps). Access to cargo areas is through sliding doors or gates.

Some sprockets are passenger carriers. Passenger seats are quite comfortable, and leave no doubt that regardless of who or what built the sprockets, they built them for human bodies.

Some passenger carriers have a toggle switch on the control panel which allows the passenger compartment to be converted into an open cargo area. If the switch is moved, and then the sprocket is contracted, when the sprocket is expanded again the seats will be gone and the area they occupied open. Other sprockets have a similar toggle switch which affects the roof, making them "convertibles."

Armor and Hardpoints

Some sprocket hulls are much tougher than average – as much as four or five times more resistant to damage than a normal hull. Sometimes this hardening applies to the whole exterior of the hull – other times only a certain facing or area will be reinforced. Needless to say, armored or reinforced sprockets are greatly desired for military applications.

Armored sprocket stuff can still be "coaxed," but a proportionally more intense electromagnetic field is required, which in turn requires more powerful and expensive equipment, which makes accessorizing a hardened sprocket generally more difficult and often more expensive.

In game terms, armored sprockets have more DR, but the same hit points. The power node of an armored sprocket will always have DR at least equal to the DR of the toughest external hardpoint.

Climate Control

All enclosed or encloseable sprockets seem to have climate control. Ventilation is good (provided the air vents aren't deliberately sealed) and interior temperature remains within the range of 70 to 80 degrees, whether the sprocket is under the polar ice cap or hovering over the caldera of a volcano.

On some sprockets – notably submarines and very high altitude flitters – climate control can be much more sophisticated. Stratospheric flitters have the ability to maintain sea-level air pressure in enclosed areas, keeping the oxygen constantly replenished at ideal levels. Submarines are even more impressive, not only maintaining correct pressure, even during rapid dives or ascents, but also displaying the ability to filter oxygen out of sea water for the crew to breathe.

Special Features

This is a catch-all category for any unusual capabilities that the individual sprocket might possess. One of the most common categories of special features is external manipulators – these include arms, pincers, blades and shovels which the driver can use to manipulate or displace objects outside the sprocket.

Although sprockets do not seem to come with weapons as such, certain special features do have an intrinsic offensive capacity. One tracked sprocket is able to extrude a 12' spike with enough force to penetrate 3" of steel plate. Two sprockets have shown the ability to generate a laser beam of lethal intensity. Rumors abound of sprockets able to heat their surroundings to the point of spontaneous combustion, or sprockets able to generate a highly injurious field of sonic vibrations.

A persistent rumor among sprocket aficionados is the "coffin," a recessed, human-sized cavity supposedly found in one sprocket (reports vary wildly as to the form and function of the sprocket). According to the rumor, a human or animal can lie in the "coffin" and the sprocket will compress normally with the passenger still inside. When the sprocket is re-expanded, it is said that the passenger will have no memory or physiological evidence of elapsed time. If the coffin really exists, its sprocket could provide a means of efficient one-way time travel. Most reputable authorities, however, consider the legend of the coffin absurd, or at least unsupported by solid evidence.

Exotics

Among sprocket buffs, there are few events more exciting than the discovery of an "exotic" – a sprocket that conforms to no other previously-known configuration, or that violates the normal "rules" of sprocket operation.

"Walkers" – sprockets that move on legs – are quite common. Most are bipedal or quadrupedal, with the cockpit/cargo space mounted above the jointed legs, but some have more exotic configurations. There are several "spiders," with 5 to 12 spindly legs that can instantly change direction and climb effortlessly over the roughest terrain. The Corpus Crab is a unique amphibious walker with 8 legs and two front-mounted "pincers" that can be used to hold and manipulate (and, if necessary, severely damage) external objects. Perhaps the strangest exotic sprocket is a tripod which moves by whirling its legs around while the pilot sits above in a gyroscopically stabilized bubble (at least, researchers think it's gyroscopically stabilized, though if



there is a gyroscope it's completely internal and invisible).

Some sprockets are simply inexplicable. The Heaven Hopper, for example, is a small, one-of-a-kind bubble-shaped sprocket with two seats and no cargo capacity. It has only one control – when the plate is toggled, the hopper flies straight up into the upper stratosphere, then descends rapidly, landing at the exact same spot from which it was launched. It has no other maneuvering capability whatsoever. Nobody has any idea what it might be intended to do. It can't even function as a carnival amusement, since it has no windows.

You and Your Sprocket

Sprocketfall proved to be a major headache for governments worldwide, and national policy on sprockets varies widely from country to country. Under dictatorial regimes, all sprockets are the property of the state. In some countries the initial keying of a sprocket without direct orders from the government is a crime. In others, an individual who masters a sprocket is subject to automatic induction into his country's military as a sprocket pilot.

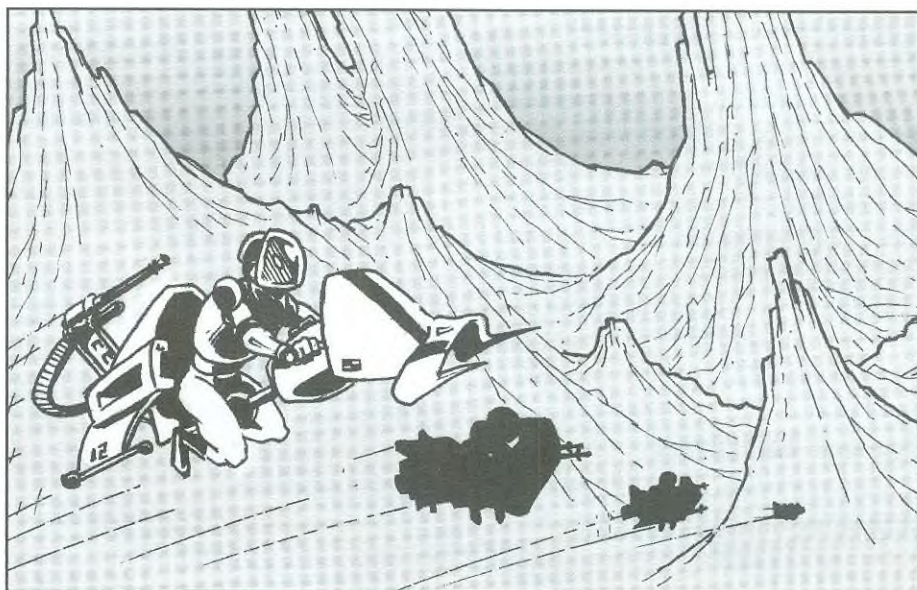
The U.S. has the most liberal sprocket policy worldwide. In the U.S., a sprocket which falls on private property belongs to the owner of that property, unless the land is being rented or leased, in which case the sprocket belongs to the “primary custodian” of the land – usually the renter. Sprockets which fall on public lands belong to the finder, as do sprockets recovered at sea. If an on-duty soldier, government official, or government employee finds a sprocket on public or government property, that sprocket belongs to the finder’s employer. All sprockets recovered on military bases or reservations, or found by military ships, become government property.

There have been no laws passed forbidding anyone from knowingly or unknowingly mastering a sprocket, but if someone knowingly or carelessly masters a sprocket which he does not own, without the owner’s prior knowledge and permission, he is subject to civil suit for damages. If an employee (including government employees and soldiers) masters a sprocket belonging to his employer without authorization, he is also subject to administrative penalties at the employer’s discretion, up to and including termination of employment.

The only other rule of sprocket triggering is one of common sense: Make sure you have enough room for whatever the sprocket will expand into. There have been cases of stupid sprocket finders triggering the transformation in a closed space like a garage, only to be crushed when the sprocket grew to a much larger size. Deliberately triggering a sprocket in a too-small space so as to harm persons or property is, of course, a crime, depending on the harm done. An expanding sprocket is not the theoretical “unstoppable force,” either – if it encounters an anchored object with 50 hit points or more, it will reverse its transformation, shrinking back to its original size and form. Objects with less than 50 hit points,

unless they can be pushed aside, will be broken or crushed by the expanding vehicle.

A new sprocket owner must register his sprocket with the local government within one week of finding it (this time limit can be extended due to mitigating circumstances like disability, illness or extreme geographical isolation). Once a sprocket has been registered, anyone with a counter-claim to ownership must prove their claim in court. Registration includes a detailed description of the sprocket in terms of form (in both expanded and contracted configurations) and function, often including photographs.



While the ownership of the sprocket might be cut and dried, the owner’s right to drive it is not so clear cut. Sprockets are subject to all laws and regulations which apply to any other vehicle of similar type. In order to operate a sprocket on public roads, waterways, or air lanes the owner must demonstrate a working knowledge of all applicable laws and regulations, and a reasonable proficiency with the sprocket itself. Unlicensed operation of a sprocket is a misdemeanor, except on private property.

Because of the unique nature of sprocket operation, most operator’s licenses are granted for a single

sprocket only. It is possible to be licensed to operate a whole class of sprockets, but this requires a *much* longer and more intensive training course; such training is normally only available through the military, although a truly dedicated hobbyist can sometimes obtain it through sprocket clubs (see below).

The government has the right to restrict the use of sprockets which can interfere with traffic (for instance, a very slow walker) or damage roads (a very heavy tracked vehicle). There is also a federal law which provides for government confiscation of any sprocket which presents “a clear and present threat

to national security or public safety,” but this law is very seldom used, and is often successfully appealed.

Any time within the first year after a new sprocket is registered, the government has the right to request that it be turned in for scientific analysis. Once the request is made, the owner has up to six months to comply. The government can hold any sprocket for analysis for up to one week; if held any longer, the owner must be financially reimbursed for any loss or inconvenience due to the absence of the sprocket. The government may not, under any circumstance, hold a

sprocket for analysis for more than 30 days without the owner's express consent. The government is forbidden by law to harm any sprocket during analysis, and if it inadvertently does so the owner is entitled to financial reparations.

Currently all sprocket laws and regulations are administered by the states, under federal guidelines. There is talk of creating a federal sprocket administration, but little concrete effort in that direction.

It is normally illegal for a private citizen to mount any offensive or defensive weaponry on his sprocket, but military and police sprockets are often armed.

Sprocket Clubs

As sprockets become more widely distributed throughout society, sprocket owners and fanciers have formed a variety of municipal or regional private sprocket clubs. These offer sprocket owners a chance to meet, compare notes, socialize, hold races and other competitions, and sometimes even familiarize themselves with the operation of sprockets other than their own.

The largest private sprocket organization is the American Sprocket Pilots Association (ASPA), which coordinates national conventions, sprocket competition and lobbying efforts on behalf of sprocket owners.

ASPA also provides reasonably priced group liability and theft insurance programs to sprocket pilots and owners.

There are several national magazines designed for sprocket pilots and fanciers. The most popular such magazine is *Sprocket Set*, with a bimonthly international circulation of almost 100,000.

The Sprocket Market

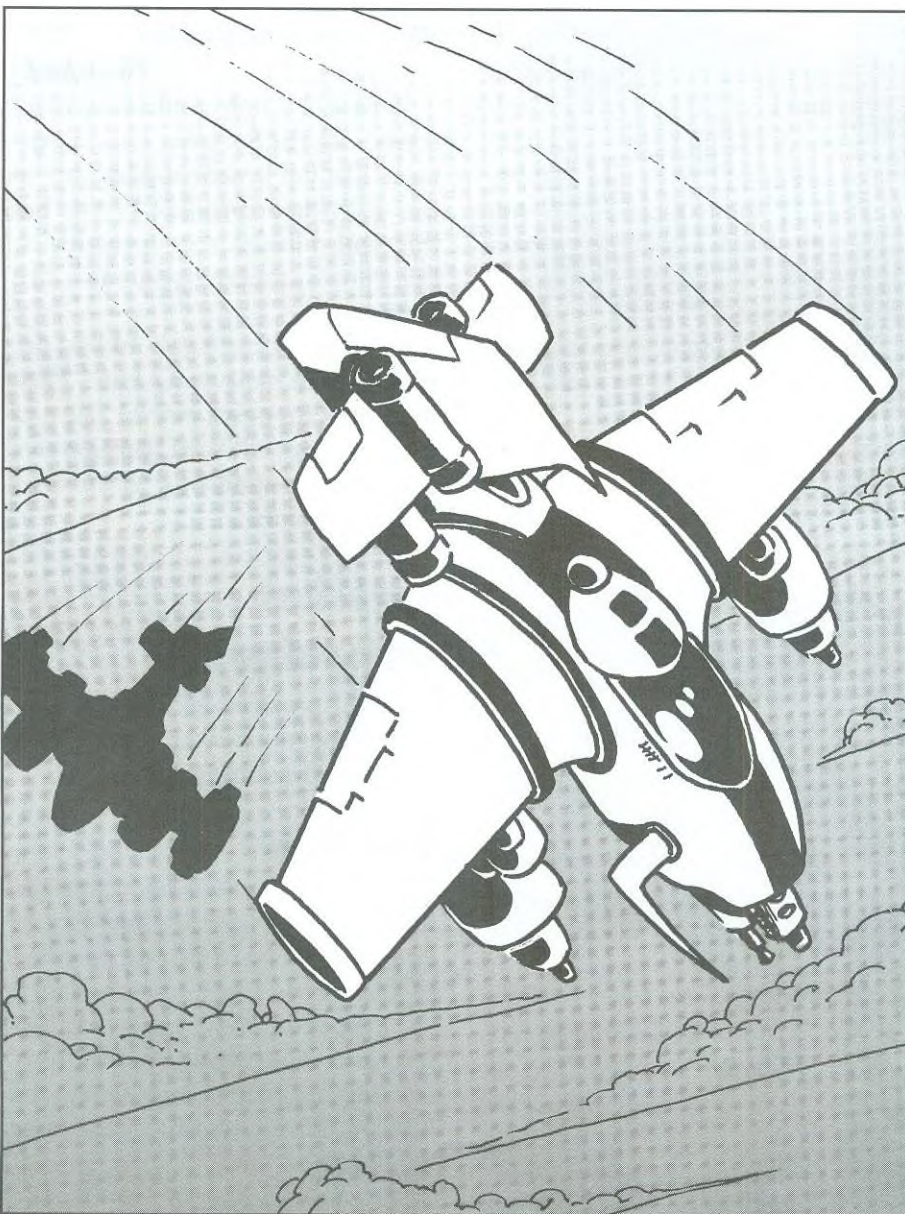
Sprockets can be bought on the open market, although sprocket sales presents a number of unique problems. Once the sprocket has been keyed, it's much, much harder for anybody except the initial master to operate. On the other hand, before the sprocket is keyed, the prospective purchaser has no idea whether he's getting a luxury yacht or a light cargo hauler. Because of this uncertainty, there are no hard-and-fast rules in the sprocket market. Each deal is absolutely unique.

Most large cities have dedicated sprocket shops which specialize in "coaxing" sprocket modification or custom paint jobs. These establishments are usually the best place to go if you want to purchase a sprocket; there are no sprocket showrooms.

The most unique profession to come out of sprocketfall is the sprocket prospector. These hardy souls comb remote and isolated wilderness areas searching public land for unclaimed sprockets. This profession has become rather romanticized in recent years, but it's a tedious and very risky career, and most who try it fail.

Gaming Sprockets

Most characters in a Sprockets campaign should be built on 75 to 150 points, with 100-point characters being the norm. If the sprockets are to be the focus of the campaign, the emphasis should be on their abilities, not their pilots'. Of course, sprockets can also be added to any other sort of campaign.



If the GM wants the players to design their own sprockets, he can give each PC a budget to do the job, depending on the nature of the campaign, in addition to his normal starting wealth. How much? Simple sprockets can cost as little as \$20,000, while most land vehicles are in excess of \$100,000 – and flying or submersible sprockets can easily run into

the millions. Whatever budget you set, make sure these “sprocket dollars” are virtual cash which can only be spent to design an unmodified sprocket. Once the sprocket is designed, any remaining money in the design budget is gone for good. Any modifications must be paid for with normal Wealth.

On the other hand, if there are only one or two sprockets in the group, the GM may find it better to forget about budgetary concerns, and just design the sprocket that best fits the needs of his campaign.

The following advantage and two skills are unique to a Sprockets campaign.

Sprocket Link 15 points

You were the first one to key your sprocket, and you have an almost instinctive understanding of its operation and capabilities. This advantage automatically gives you the Pilot Imprinted Sprocket skill at IQ level.

Sprocket Link must be bought separately for each sprocket you master (the GM may also rule that no PC can key more than one sprocket).

Normally this advantage is only available to a character who was actually the first human being to key a newly-fallen sprocket, and only one person may be imprinted to a given sprocket. The only exceptions are identical twins or biological children of the person who keyed the sprocket, who may buy a link to the same sprocket if they pay an additional 10-point Unusual Background.

Pilot Sprocket (type) M/VH
Defaults to IQ-12,
similar vehicle skill -8, or
**Pilot Imprinted
Sprocket** -5*

You have intensively studied sprocket operation, and

have learned to operate most sprockets of a given type (sample types: wheeled, tracked, walkers, hovers, floaters, flitters, watercraft, submarines). Note that for default purposes, there is no similar modern vehicle skill which corresponds to Pilot Sprocket (Walker).

* If you have a Sprocket Link, you get an extremely favorable default when piloting sprockets of a similar type to the one you're linked to. However, the maximum skill level in Pilot Sprocket available as a default from Pilot Imprinted Sprocket is 11. If you wish to increase your Pilot Sprocket skill beyond 11, you must do so using Mental/Very Hard point costs.

Pilot Imprinted Sprocket M/E
No default

This skill is only available to characters with the Sprocket Link advantage. The full benefit applies only to the individual sprocket keyed, but this skill defaults very favorably to the Pilot Sprocket (type) skill. See above.

The Sprocket Link advantage includes this skill at IQ level. Pilot Imprinted Sprocket may be taken at greater than IQ level at character creation by spending additional character points.

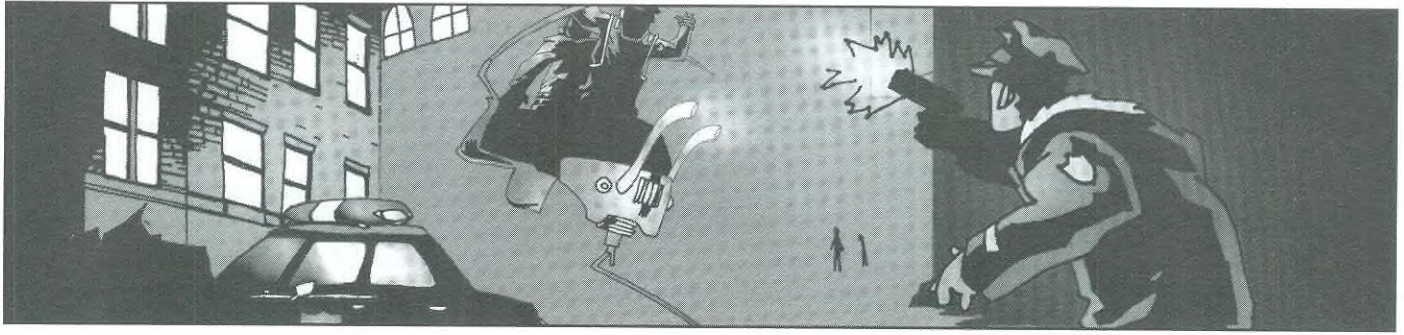
Sprocket Campaigns

Once sprockets are introduced to the campaign, how can the PCs use them for adventuring?

Hobbyists

This is a very low-key campaign, suitable for low-point-value characters. The PCs are private sprocket owners, perhaps the members of a local sprocket club. They use their sprockets in races and competitions, in search operations and rescues, and perhaps to fight local criminals or hoodlums.





Vigilantes

This is a less plausible, but more exciting variation of the “hobbyists” campaign. The PCs are private citizens who use their sprockets to fight crime on an ongoing, organized basis. In addition to their sprockets, the PCs probably represent a variety of useful crimefighting skills and backgrounds. The vigilantes might work with the law, outside the law, or both, depending on the circumstances.

Fugitives

The adventurers are on the run, and are using their sprockets to stay ahead of their would-be captors. PCs can be real criminals on the lam or falsely-accused innocents. They can also be running from an organized crime boss, corrupt corporation, or dishonest politician that covets their sprockets.

A variation of this campaign might have the party as revolutionaries using their sprockets to fight an oppressive foreign regime, or even a dictatorial alternate U.S. government.

Law Enforcement

This campaign revolves around a team of cops or federal agents that uses their sprockets to track and capture dangerous criminals. In this campaign, sprockets might be lightly armed.

Fast Response Team

This is a military campaign, centered on a special forces squad of sprocket-mounted soldiers or mercenaries fighting terrorists or hostile governments in international

hot-spots like the Persian Gulf, Bosnia or Central America. The team’s sprockets are certain to be armed to the teeth. Since sprockets need no fuel, and very little maintenance, they would be greatly favored by covert or guerrilla operations units.

Invasion!

Whoever dropped the sprockets did so because the earth was in imminent danger of invasion from another world. Now the aliens are here, and the sprocket pilots are at the vanguard of global defense.

Horror

Suppose sprockets are really *evil*? What if they eat people? What if they eat *souls*? What if they’re just biding their time posing as non-sentient vehicles until enough of them arrive that they can take over? Why do some people who attempt to master a sprocket just vanish, screaming?

In this campaign the PCs can be cornerstone of an anti-sprocket resistance – the first (surviving) humans to guess the sprockets’ true nature. Or, for an even more paranoid option, everyone might *know* that the sprockets are evil, but use them anyway, either because the benefits outweigh the negatives (in the short term), or because the sprockets won’t *let* humanity stop using them.

Other Genres

The alternate-present world of sprockets can be easily incorporated into other modern-day genres like *Espionage* or *Special Ops*. The sprockets’ mysterious origin makes

them a natural for *Illuminati* campaigns, and their powers make them equally suitable for *Supers*. Supers and sprockets are a natural match, as their powers and connections will make it significantly easier for supers to detect sprocketfalls and beat competitors to fallen sprockets.

Sprockets can also be used in eras or worlds other than our own. It’s easy to introduce sprockets into any futuristic campaign, but with a little effort they can even be used in a historical or fantasy campaign. In a low-tech milieu, sprockets would probably be regarded as either bizarre (possibly sinister) magical artifacts or as gifts from the gods. Their pilots would be equally likely to be regarded as either divinely blessed or demon possessed.

Sprockets have several advantages over other vehicle types, most especially the fact that they don’t require fuel or more than minimal maintenance. They would be a godsend to time travelers or interplanetary scouts in the field (although, as described above, the known types of sprockets can only be used on worlds with a significant atmosphere).

In a post-holocaust campaign, sprockets could become literally the most important objects in the world. Immediately after the “big one,” sprockets would play a key role in rescue and relief operations, and in public security, due to their durability (sprockets are probably immune to EMP and most forms of radiation) and lack of logistical needs. A few generations later, most of humanity might be reduced to hand-carts and water wheels, but the sprockets will still be as shiny and efficient as ever.

Sprocket Damage

A sprocket which is damaged to 0 hit points can no longer operate, but can change. The ability to change form is lost when the sprocket is reduced to a negative value equal to its total hit points.

Sprockets regenerate one hit point per day, as long as they are not operated or changed during that day. The ability to regenerate is only lost if the power node is reduced to negative hit points.

Building Sprockets

You will need the rules in *GURPS Vehicles* to build sprockets. But the information there doesn't really describe how a sprocket works – it just gives you a framework for describing the vehicle's capabilities. When it says (in one of the sample vehicles below, for example) that a sprocket has a Fusion Air-Ram with 30,000 lbs. of thrust, that exact piece of equipment is not really on the airplane – it's just that *whatever* it is that makes the SkyFlitter go, its performance characteristics come closest to that Air-Ram. Keep that in mind as you go through the vehicle-building process.

Sprockets are, inherently, simple vehicles. Everything about them is geared toward the basic job of transportation; sprockets do not come with CB radios, tape decks, galleys, sleeping quarters, weapons, or anything else that could be considered an "extra." The only things in the "Accessories" section of *GURPS Vehicles* that will commonly be found in a sprocket are advanced controls and some sort of sensor system. The visibility from inside a sprocket is typically the equivalent of Low Light TV (p. VE50), though most submersible and airborne sprockets also have some sort of sonar and/or radar as well.

When determining the "virtual cost" of your sprocket as you design it and the availability of components, treat a sprocket as TL13 – except for

the armor and hardpoints, which are TL15, and the power node.

A sprocket's power node is a complete mystery to modern science – the closest thing to it in *GURPS Vehicles* is a TL14 Total Conversion power plant (p. VE86). The power node is not a separate component – its weight, cost and volume are all included in the stats for the basic body of the sprocket. How much power does the power node produce? There is no tried and true mathematical formula; the answer seems to be, "enough." When designing a sprocket, just decide what you want it to do (within reason – farm tractors that can break the land speed record, or ocean liners that can reach escape velocity, or motorcycles that can pull 30-ton loads should be vetoed by the GM) and assume that the power node has enough juice to get it done.

After the basic sprocket has been built, using the "virtual cash" in the budget set by the referee, you can add accessories. Accessories are limited to the tech level of the campaign, and must be paid for (out of "real" money) by the owner. Worthwhile extras might include radios and other com-

munications equipment, supplementary sensor and imaging equipment, crew quarters, sanitary facilities, galley, even simple things like door locks. Remember that a sprocket cannot transform into its unexpanded mode if more than 5% of its total volume is taken up with accessories, though for some sprocket owners, this is not a consideration. Let's face it – after adding over 500 hotel rooms, 3 restaurants, a theater, a bank vault, offices, and over 3,000 slot machines and gaming tables, the floating *Cloud City* is *never* going to be turned back into a suitcase-sized meteor . . .

To make these modifications, though, you need a Coaxing Kit:

Coaxing Kit

This is a box of the special power tools needed to mount accessories to sprocket hulls. All screws and bolts must be tough but non-ferrous, and the tools themselves have the ability to generate an electromagnetic field. Each kit comes with a couple of hundred assorted non-ferrous bolts, screws, etc. This assortment can be replaced for \$50, or they can be purchased individually for \$1 each.



The coax kit can coax mounts into sprocket-stuff of up to 40 DR. For twice the price a kit can be purchased which will coax sprocket-stuff up to 100 DR, and for three times the price, a kit is available which will coax any known sprocket hull.

Cost is \$750 and weight is 30 lbs.

Sample Sprockets

Halftrack Farm Vehicle

This is Howard Nernst's utility farm vehicle, the very first sprocket ever found:

Subassemblies: Halftrack (2), wheels (2).

Propulsion: TL13 27 kW tracked drivetrain (HP 94, 27 kW).

Instruments and Electronics: TL13 LLTV, 10 Magnification Power.

Controls: Electronic.

Crew Station: "Driver" runs all systems from roomy crew station.

Occupancy: Short.

Passengers: One.

Crew: Driver.

Accommodations: Two roomy seats.

Power: 27 kW Power Node (HT 50). Powers all systems.

Access, Cargo and Empty Space: 100 cf cargo space. 14.14 cf empty space.

Volume: Body 200 cf, halftrack 80 cf each, wheels 40 cf each.

Structure: TL12 light frame, advanced materials.

Hit Points: Body 187, halftracks 94 each, wheels 112 each.

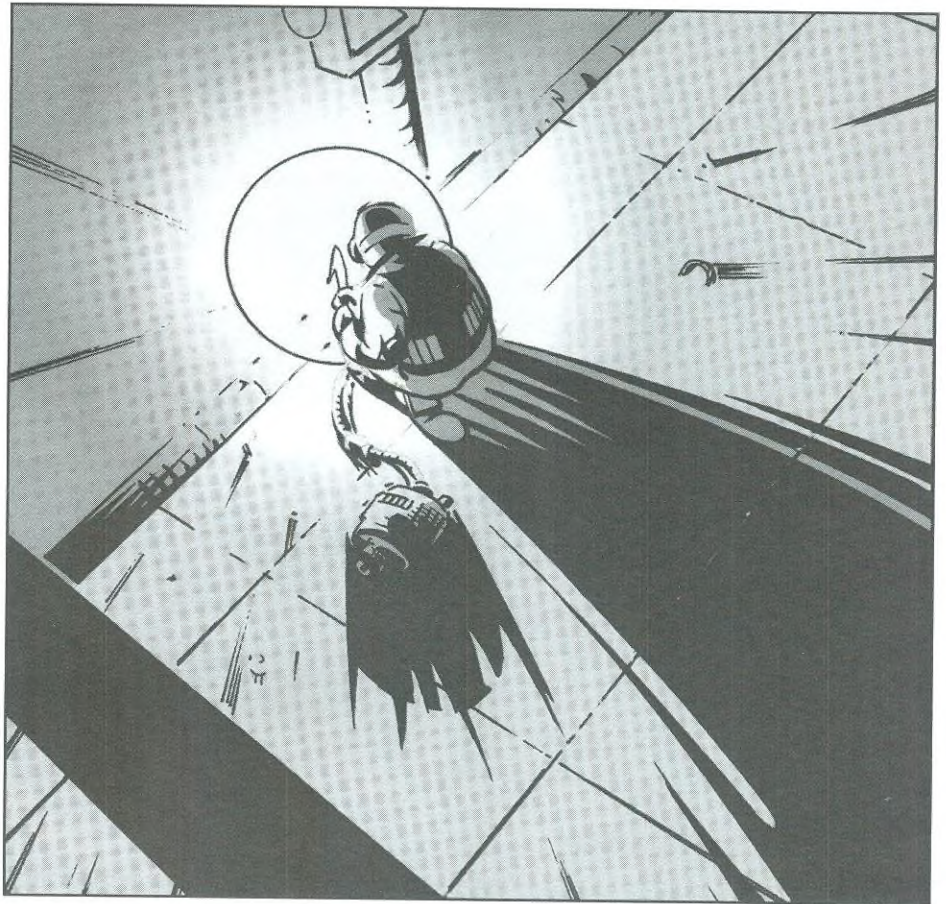
Structural Options: Improved suspension.

Armor: Overall: PD 4, DR 25 advanced metal.

Vision: Good.

Statistics: Empty weight 2,505.98 lbs. Usual payload 2,000 lbs. Loaded weight 2,705.98 lbs. Volume 305.86 cf. Size modifier +4. Price \$142,620. HT 14.

Ground Performance: Speed 83.56 mph. gAccel 3.71 mph/s. gDecel 25 mph/s. gMR 0.5. gSR 3. Low GP. 1/3 off-road speed.



GyroWalker

This is one of the strangest sprockets ever found. It is a pentapod housing its pilot in a gyro-stabilized cockpit above the leg "hip" rotor. It moves by rotating the "hip" section to bring one leg to contact the ground while the others are in the air. Despite its eccentric and seemingly unstable movement, it is very stable, each leg responding immediately to its controls so that it can walk over virtually any ground that the legs can clear. And standing atop 4-meter legs, that's a lot of ground.

The GyroWalker is also heavily armored, and quite dangerous – it can step on or kick a target, with a ST 52 punch!

Subassemblies: Legs (5 legs)

Propulsion: TL13 21kW Leg Drivetrain (HP 30, 21 kW).

Instruments and Electronics: TL13 LLTV, 10 Magnification Power.

Controls: Electronic.

Crew Station: "Driver" runs all systems from roomy crew station.

Occupancy: Short.

Crew: Driver.

Power: 21 kW Power Node (HT 50). Powers all systems.

Access, Cargo and Empty Space: 70 cf cargo space. 37.77 empty space.

Volume: Body 150 cf, legs 12 cf each.

Structure: TL12 light frame, advanced materials.

Hit Points: Body 131, legs 30 each.

Structural Options: Improved suspension.

Armor: PD 4, DR 50 advanced ablative.

Vision: Poor.

Statistics: Empty weight 1618.31 lbs. Usual payload 1,400 lbs. Loaded weight 3018.31 lbs. Volume 210 cf. Size modifier +3. Price \$137,975. HT 14.

Ground Performance: Speed 112.08 mph. gAccel 4.08 mph/s. gDecel 20 mph/s. gMR 1. gSR 5. Very low GP. Full off-road speed.

In the Aftermath of the Banestorm:

By Steffan O'Sullivan

A Different Yrth Campaign Setting

and Ann Dupuis

Arslan cursed, his heart-felt words torn from his throat by the demonic wind. His small bay mare reared and plunged about in terror, threatening to bolt, as her master struggled to retain control. "Keep watch on the prisoners!" he shouted, but his men had their own troubles with terrified mounts and it was doubtful he could be heard over the wind's roar.

Whatever this demon wind was, it had come upon them without warning. In a matter of moments, the sky had turned black, as though filled with a plague of locusts. The wind whipped sand and debris into his eyes and stung his face with bits of gravel. Unseasonable rain pelted down, the wind-driven drops stinging as much as the sand. His mare suddenly stopped bucking and stood, splay-legged and trembling, as the very earth began to shake.

Arslan spared a glance about, and saw his concern for the prisoners was groundless – the fat merchant of Constantinople, the only Christian prisoner he could make out in the near-total darkness, had his belly to the ground and was moaning in as much terror as Arslan's horse. Someone – perhaps a Turk, perhaps a Christian – screamed in fear, the sound barely rising above the combined thunder of demon wind and earthquake. Or

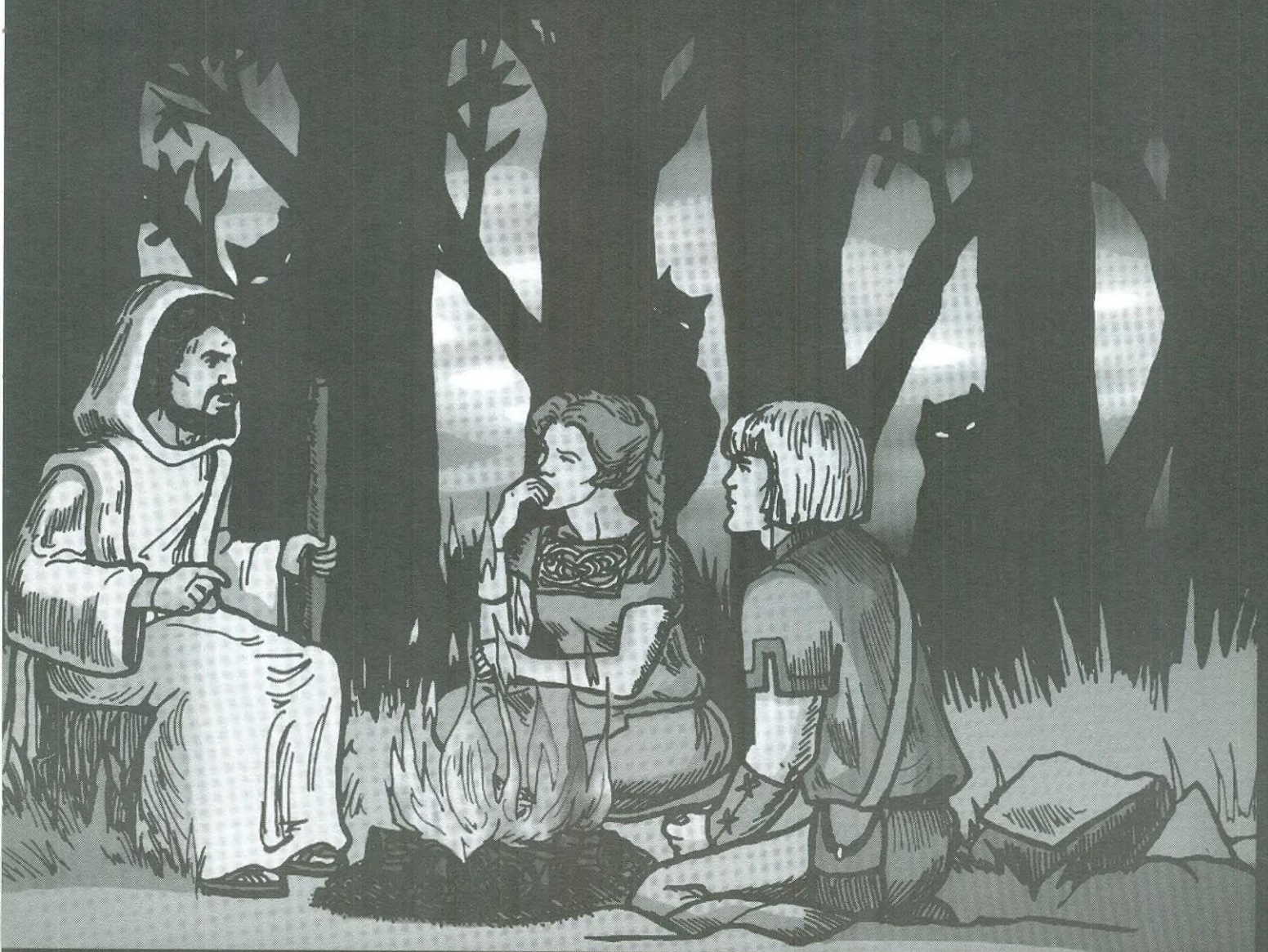
perhaps it was one of the horses. The storm ended as suddenly as it had begun. The earth shuddered one last time, and subsided. The wind died, leaving behind comparative silence in which the sobs of frightened men – and the two Christian women held prisoner in the ox cart, atop the rich treasures bound for the Sultan – could plainly be heard.

It was then that Arslan saw something that made his blood run cold. Beneath the still-trembling hooves of his mare, the road was as it should be – though now several men, both Turk and Christian, grovelled in its dirt in abject fear. But a scant few horse-lengths beyond where Arslan's mare had halted, the road vanished. Where, a few moments before, it had wound its way through dusty hills, the road simply stopped. Beyond – and, indeed, all around them – were the impossibly dense tree trunks of a forest that had not existed mere moments ago.

Before his men could realize their officer was as bewildered and frightened as they were, Arslan snapped out commands to restore order. His men jumped to obey, making sure all prisoners were secure and the horses calmed. Arslan took a deep breath, pondering their next move. "Great Allah," he thought, "what is this place?"



Yrth 1100



Most Yrth campaigns are set in the equivalent of the current Earth year, well after the Banestorm. But there's a wealth of adventure possibilities to be found in a different type of Yrth campaign – one set during the immediate aftermath of the Banestorm.

This time period is covered only briefly in *GURPS Fantasy*. With just a little work, the GM can flesh out this setting and create a campaign focusing on the struggles of humans newly arrived on Yrth. At first, the characters must focus simply on surviving and learning to deal with the strange new world in which they find themselves. Once past the initial problems of finding food and shelter, the characters may set about exploring their new surroundings – and establishing the communities that become the foundations of the human nations of Yttaria. The player characters may very well become the leaders and shapers of Yrth's future.

Yrth at the Time of the Banestorm

According to *GURPS Fantasy*, the dark elves critically failed their Orc Bane spell in the year 1050. The result was the Banestorm which ravaged space-time and transported beings to Yrth from at least three different planets: Earth, Gabrook, and Loren'dil (p. F8). *GURPS Fantasy* covers the next 200 years in a sentence or two, mentioning that powerful human leaders quickly attracted followers and acquired territory.

A "Banestorm Aftermath" campaign may be set any time after the first occurrence of the Banestorm in 1050. The PCs may be among the very first humans to arrive on Yrth, or they may be transported with later arrivals. GMs have a bit of leeway in developing a Banestorm Aftermath campaign. Simple adjustments in such things as the time and place of

arrival allow the GM to tailor such factors as terrain, animals, sentient races, and other refugees from Earth to focus on the specific campaign flavor desired.

Here are some questions to consider before beginning a Banestorm Aftermath campaign: Did the PCs come with their entire village, or just themselves as a small band? Do they have an overlord or are they their own bosses? What are the local terrain, flora and fauna like? How far is it to the nearest humans, and how are they likely to be greeted there? What other beings from other planets are in the vicinity? And so on.

The Map

For campaigns set in the first decade or so after the Banestorm, the map of Yttaria is identical to the map in the back of *GURPS Fantasy*, except:



Steffan's Yrth 1100

Campaign

While I've run and played in many campaigns in the standard Yrth, one of the best games I ever ran was set in Yrth in the year 1100; the player characters were among the first humans to be transported by the Banestorm.

The date in the book for the Banestorm is 1050. Unfortunately, this was a bit awkward for my purposes: there were no English people yet in 1050, as we define the term. The Norman Invasion wasn't until 1066, and "English" usually refers to the mixture of Anglo-Saxon and Norman cultures. Likewise, it is before the Crusades. But I wanted the PCs to be English, with the tension of the Crusades, and also in the first group of humans arriving on Yrth. So I changed the Banestorm to 1100, which allows all of this to happen.

I didn't tell the players the game would be on Yrth. I said it would be a game set in medieval England at the time of the First Crusade, and that the world view of medieval people was actually true (there are dragons, unicorns, working magic, etc.).

I informed them that the local lord was going on Crusade, and the party could either accompany him to the Holy Lands or stay behind and be in charge of the village while he was gone. I told them I had some adventures planned either way they decided, so long as they all made the same choice. After some debate, they agreed to be those left behind in the village, and made their characters accordingly.

Starting characters were 100 points, and any type of historical medieval character was allowed. A character was allowed to take Magical Aptitude, but no spells. I did hint that it might be possible to learn spellcasting later in the campaign. Only one player took Magical Aptitude, and only one level of it.

In the campaign I ran, the PCs' entire village was transported to Yrth. The PCs had the same social standing they had on Earth; they were left in charge of the village when the overlord joined the Crusade. They were also the only fighting force worth mentioning – anyone else was merely "militia." Consequently, most villagers were eager to take orders from the player characters, which made life . . . interesting, especially when the PCs bickered.

At first things were rough: lots of orc attacks, but no other human encounters. Eventually they learned how to fight the orcs, and took to making preemptive strikes against orc villages. However, they then had to deal with lots of problems with the villagers (NPCs). While the villagers looked to the player characters as protectors, they didn't go to them to settle disputes. Fights were breaking out, and people were getting hurt. Eventually, a player figured out that they needed to start them farming to keep them happy.

So they organized a party to find the best possible fields, and helped to clear the land. Since they were in a forest, this meant there was a lot of wood available for *something*. Somebody wanted to build a castle, but the majority voted for a palisaded wall around the village, instead.

This turned out to be a good idea, when a group of semi-intelligent reptilian carnivores swept to Yrth by the Banestorm from who-knows-which-planet attacked the

village. There was no attempt at communication, from either side, and after some serious NPC losses, they managed to chase away the vastly reduced reptilian horde.

The next few sessions dealt with meeting local sentient folk: Elves, a lone halfling, some Dark Elves, and a Gnome cleric. The players did fairly well with these encounters, being friendly enough not start open warfare, yet cautious enough to withstand the Dark Elves' attack.

About session eight, they rescued a half-dead elf from a wyvern. This was a turning point, though no one knew it at the time. This elf stayed with them, learning their language and acting as translator, for the rest of the campaign. He also taught the one PC with Magery some spells, as well as taught the farmers which plants were edible, which herbs had healing properties, and so on.

As GM, I decided at this point that they needed something like that. They had done well the first seven sessions, but were now ready to have the village become more self-sufficient, and learn a lot more about Yrth fairly quickly. I could sense the campaign was ready to shift gears: from the initial shock and scrambling for survival, to expansion and exploration.

By mutual agreement, we decided to speed the game up for a while, then return to normal play speed. I asked them to tell me what they wanted to accomplish in the next year, both personally and as a group. We then worked out much of that in individual sessions, and returned as a group one year later. The mage character knew a handful of spells now, they knew healing herbs and which denizens were dangerous and which friendly, and the village, protected by its palisade, was surviving okay. It was time to meet other humans.

The first other humans they met were in a struggling village. They quickly decided to help them out. A road was built, grain was shared, a militia trained, and even a couple of weddings bonded the two villages. The player characters easily dominated the previous top cats of the new village, and some got the idea of starting a barony.

This was a bit quick for me, but the players seemed ready. So they next encountered a human village that was in *better* shape than theirs. It was larger, fortified, and had real knights with real metal armor protecting it. *Gulp!* This was more than they had bargained for!

They tried peaceful dealings, and found the local ruler willing – but willing that they should submit to him. He was a petty lord back on Earth, and had a higher status than the PCs. They wanted to be recognized as equals, and were laughed at and put into jail. Fortunately, the mage was able to get them out, and they made their way, weaponless, back to their own village, with vengeance on their minds.

The next few sessions dealt with preparations for war with the established ruler. It was a tough war, fought mostly on the guerrilla level, but eventually they won. It was a proud day when they got their first metal armor as spoils of the victory.

At that point, the party intended to expand their domain, becoming rulers of all they met. Unfortunately, the gaming group broke up with folk moving away, so we never got to play any further. But I'll always remember the Yrth 1100 campaign as one of the most exciting settings that evoked some of the best roleplaying I've ever seen.

1) All those human cities, towns and political borders don't exist; and

2) There is a *lot* more forest than shown. The elves didn't build cities, so none exist in their territories. Elven territory, however, is enormous: most of Eastern Yttaria is forested, and any forested land is dotted with elven villages.

The dwarves, of course, do have cities, and they are probably in the same places as listed in *GURPS Fantasy*.

Orcs must be ubiquitous, if the dark elves thought them such an infestation as to craft a massive spell against them. Orc "villages" will be scattered throughout the continent. As orcs are naturally contentious folks, their settlements are likely to be very small and crude.

Dark elf settlements are likely all destroyed in the Banestorm catastrophe. There may still be some far-flung settlements, perhaps even a large one in the area that is now called the Black Woods. There will also be wandering dark elves seeking a new home, of course.

Human Settlements

European humans will arrive primarily in what is now Megalos, and Moslem humans in what is now Al-Haz, Al-Wazif, and Cardiel. Some Asians will appear in the modern Sahud, and some Vikings in the current Nomad Lands – these are up to the GM to run as he pleases. It's doubtful that there will be much contact with humans of different cultures for the first generation or so;

each will be trying desperately to survive in their own new locale. Only once the land is cultivated, the orcs subdued, relations with the next village stabilized, and so on, will humans think of expanding. *GURPS Fantasy* puts this about 150 years after the first arrivals.

The GM can decide how far apart to set the human villages, and how large to make the groups that arrive from Earth. Setting them fairly far apart gives the PCs a chance to develop self-sufficiency. *GURPS Fantasy* states that some entire villages and ships were brought to Yrth, but that doesn't preclude such things as a small hunting or war party being snatched up, or a merchant caravan, or even a single wandering bard or poacher.

Also, it's not necessary to bring groups that were close on Earth the same distance apart on Yrth. Nor is it necessary for a village to be dropped in the same habitat as it occupied on Earth. A small Welsh village on the edge of forest might now find itself on the edge of the vast central plains of Yttaria – within walking distance of a village from the Italian Alps.

Non-Human Arrivals

While *GURPS Fantasy* only discusses the arrivals from three planets, it is possible to include many others. Perhaps the reason some alien races are not represented in *GURPS Fantasy* is because they were killed off by the year 1200. It is also very possible to include almost anything in *GURPS Fantasy Folk* or *GURPS Aliens* as a Banestorm arrival.

Character Set-Up

One decision you must make as GM is how to present this new campaign to your players. A very good way to invoke surprise and confusion and wonder on the part of the players (as well as the player characters) is to set the players up for a "historical" European medieval roleplaying



campaign. Let them design their characters with that type of campaign in mind. You may want to hint that in this campaign, the medieval world-view is actually true – that is, sorcerers and magicians and dragons actually exist, although they're very rare and the player characters have never personally encountered them. You may wish to allow characters to take Magical Aptitude, but no spells; you can hint that characters may be able to learn spellcasting later in the campaign. For a campaign focusing on pure survival, you may wish to have characters start at less than the normal 100 points – they can represent the peasants and other “ordinary folk” that were wrenched from their homes and deposited in Yrth's wilderness. A campaign focusing on the PCs as leaders and future history-makers should have characters starting at 100 points or more.

Non-Human Player Characters

It's also possible to let the players take the role of non-human PCs. Of course, this means letting them know the whole plan of the campaign in advance: that they'll be playing at the time of the first humans on Yrth. This isn't necessarily bad, and does allow for non-human PCs. However, language differences among PCs can create extreme barriers – or great roleplaying challenges, depending on your players' abilities.

Elves and Dwarves are native to Yrth, and are distinct possibilities for player characters in this case. An elf PC would have to be a very young elf to be only 100 points. This actually makes sense, though: Only an adventurous young elf is likely to be open enough to befriend strange newcomers to their planet quickly. Since this is the first meeting between humans and elves, there are no half-elves as of yet.

Interaction between humans and dwarves in the first human generation on Yrth is unlikely; Dwarven territory is too hostile for desperate folk to attempt to settle. But a case can be

made for an exiled or wandering dwarf to join a group of newly arrived aliens if someone has their heart set on playing a dwarf.

Halflings are swept to Yrth from Loren'dil at the same time as the earliest humans, and are also a possibility.

Character Social Status

Human PCs may be modeled after nearly any type of medieval character, from peasant to lord. (As GM, you may wish to narrow the choices to better fit the particular campaign focus you have in mind.) Social Status is an important character trait, as it will greatly influence the interactions the PCs have with non-player-character humans – and even with one another. The deeply ingrained social customs involving status in medieval Europe provide ample opportunities for intense roleplaying, as PCs either attempt to enforce their status over peasants (who may be only too relieved to let warrior-types direct their fate in bewildering and dangerous circumstances) or break the bonds of social custom (if their overlords prove ineffectual in the new environment).

The social status chosen by the players for their characters may cause some logistical problems, especially if there is an NPC overlord involved. PCs may look toward their overlord for direction, rather than deciding their own fates. Fortunately, if this situation detracts from the campaign you wish to run, overlords are easily removed from the game. There will be battles with orcs and other contentious groups, and leaders are primary targets. If you've established some bonds of loyalty and respect between the PCs and their NPC overlord – through some earlier gaming sessions concerning events before the Banestorm, or in the first adventures in Yrth – the NPC overlord can die a heroic death and, with his last breath, charge the PCs with getting the rest of his people to safety (or some other equally melodramatic plot device).

The Banestorm

Once you've set up the player characters as villagers, mercenaries, merchants, or whatever, you may wish to run an adventure or two set in the “mundane” world of medieval Earth. This helps establish the player characters' personalities, and lulls the players into thinking that this really is going to be a mostly historical campaign.

Then the Banestorm comes.

At first, the Banestorm makes its appearance as a normal earthly storm. After a while, though, it becomes obvious to the characters that they have never seen a storm of this intensity before. The darkness is very frightening – visibility is cut to almost nothing. The winds are terrific, and at some point form an impenetrable wall. It feels as if an earthquake is accompanying the storm.

This will be the same, whether the PCs are in their village, out hunting, guarding a caravan, on shipboard bound for the Holy Lands, etc. Whole villages are swept up, ships at sea will never find a familiar port again, entire caravans – or perhaps just a segment of one! – are taken off to Yrth.

As GM, you should describe the Banestorm shift as dramatically as possible. The setting should be so starkly different from what the characters are used to, and the players convinced thoroughly of this, that they'll want to roleplay wonder and awe at everything they see. When the storm finally subsides, it should be late in the day. Unless the party is on a ship at sea, the first thing they'll notice is that their surroundings have changed drastically! A quiet village, formerly surrounded by pleasant fields, with two or three roads meandering off into the distance over low hills, will now find itself surrounded by a deep, nearly impenetrable forest, without anything wider than a deer track in sight. Fields? Not any more. Hills? Maybe, but different: larger, steeper, and undoubtedly in the wrong places.

This may be worse for a caravan party: the road is gone. There are threatening noises from the woods all around. Perhaps there *is* a village in sight, but it turns out to be an orc settlement!

The Campaign

There are three basic stages to a Banestorm Aftermath campaign (although many variations are possible). They are: Survival (when the player characters and any NPCs transported with them struggle to survive the rigors of the wilderness); Scouting and Exploration (which may not occur in earnest until after the player characters and their companions have established a relatively stable settlement); and Carving Out Kingdoms (in which player characters may take an active role in establishing the communities that will eventually grow into the human nations known in Yrth's 20th century). Throughout the campaign, PCs will have to learn many new things. In a well-run campaign, players will feel as though they're learning with their characters. Survival skills and fighting skills will probably be the most useful skills at first, but the GM should reward any creative use of any other type of skill. Craft skills, social skills, even artistic skills can all come into play.

As GM, you should take advantage of the unfamiliarity of the player characters with their new environment. There are no established kingdoms, no laws to break, no "next village down the road" to replenish supplies at – in fact, no roads. The player characters (and any NPCs with them) are pretty much on their own, on a hostile planet. There are many real and ready enemies, many more potential enemies, and a few potential allies to be won. In the former category are the orcs, a few straggling dark elves, and various beasties. In the latter two categories are other humans the player characters may meet.



Survival

The player characters' first concern upon arriving on Yrth will be how to survive the night. Yttaria of this time period is very wild. The elves prefer a pristine habitat, and the orcs aren't organized enough to have cleared much land. Only the dwarves alter their environment radically, but they stick to their mountain strongholds.

Consequently, fierce creatures roam freely, especially if the Banestorm brought some orcbanes from other worlds. There will probably be orcs very close, if not right at hand when the humans arrive. (After

all, the humans were summoned as orcbanes, so wherever a human settlement is plopped down, orcs shouldn't be too far away.) No sentient beings they meet will be able to speak with the humans. If they're lucky, they may eventually meet an elf with some Communication Spells, but until then, they're probably incommunicado.

Player characters and NPC companions will probably spend the first few days after arrival seeking adequate sources of food and water and protecting one another from predators (wild animals, orcs and possibly other sentient beings). Once some sort of routine is established, entire

adventures can center around the need for food. Warrior-type PCs may find themselves protecting farmers while they clear the land, till it, sow crops (provided they can find seed), and reap the harvests. Other adventures may revolve around the search for a good site on which to settle.

Scouting and Exploration

There may very well be scouting expeditions in the first few years, perhaps in an attempt to find an area more suitable to cultivation than a dense forest, or less orc-infested. Player characters make logical scouts, and such a setting makes a good campaign. The PCs may very well find themselves responsible for a large group of humans (the population of an entire village, for example), and be looked upon as leaders and protectors. In such a case, the player characters and the NPCs who follow them may need to uproot themselves and move to another site more than once before finding a truly suitable site for settlement.

Carving Out Kingdoms

Eventually it will be necessary for the player characters to meet other humans. Most medieval folk are fairly tough and self-sufficient, but few of them are leader personalities. There may or may not be many trained fighters; there may or may not be those who even remember many laws. After roleplaying the initial shock for a few sessions, there will come the inevitable time when someone says, "Let's set up our own country!" Many folk will greet this with relief, provided the PCs are honorable. After being threatened by unknown forces for a while, people are quite willing to follow someone skilled in warfare who promises protection.

Most human lands will have to be carved from elven territory. While most elves are not evil, they will not be delighted with the idea of humans cutting down large tracts of forest to

plant crops. There is much potential for contention.

At the same time, the elves, being the kind and wise folk they are, will probably not actively oppose the struggling humans, whose lives have been shattered by the experience of the Banestorm. They may even train those humans with latent Magery, though that may not happen for a generation or two.

The dark elves won't be a major problem to humans at this time – their communities have been shattered by the failure of the Bane Summoning. But there may be some wandering bands trying to establish new villages away from their old lands, which are now largely a No-Mana zone. Dark elves are dark elves: they will be hostile to humans no matter what the year.



There probably won't be much contact with Dwarves at first. Their mountain fastnesses are not the type of land that humans would be trying to settle right away. On the other hand, they will need iron fairly soon: they only have a limited amount of iron goods that arrived with their village, ship, caravan, or whatever.

Orcs, on the other hand, should be everywhere. There will be instant hostility from the orcs, as is their nature. Much of the campaign I ran consisted of small skirmishes with orcs, orcs scouting out human villages and attempting to eradicate them, or vice versa. Fortunately for the humans, orcs live in small bands and are extremely disorganized. But they'll be almost everywhere the humans are.

Of course, not all campaigns will follow the progression of campaign focus detailed above (from Survival to Kingdom-Creation). Your own campaign may head in an entirely different direction. But we hope this article has inspired you to take a fresh look at Yrth – and to treat your players to the same.

Adventure Seeds

First Encounter

Actually, this can be many sessions' worth of gaming, as the concept applies to everything unearthly. The first encounter with the elves, for example, can make or break the party. The GM should be careful not to say, "You see some elves . . ." since the earthlings have never seen such a creature before. Remember that even the best players will bring their knowledge to their characters. "Oh, whew! Elves. Thank heavens. We approach with our hands empty and palms out, peacefully." The GM should be careful to say, instead, "You meet a group of people you've never seen before." At this point, he should wait for reactions from players, then add, "You notice their eyes seem strange. They are extremely large for one thing, and very dark. You don't

notice any whites in their eyes at all." At this point the party will get nervous, and possibly even ask about the ears – again bringing player knowledge to the table they should leave behind. They can't see the ears clearly – they're hidden by their caps, etc.

Likewise, orcs, dwarves, a dragon, a giant, even a group of halflings can all be encountered as an evening's gaming session. Each experience should be set up so the players don't know right away if the strangers are likely to be friends or enemies. Remember that the *characters* have never met anything quite like any of these before. Always describe them somewhat vaguely, somewhat mysteriously, somewhat bizarrely. Anything like that *would* be vague, mysterious and bizarre to a human!

"Me Tarzan, You Jane"

Roleplaying learning a language the hard way is actually a lot of fun, for those who enjoy such things. I was always disappointed by the ease of language acquisition in Edgar Rice Burroughs' writings, for example. While as a boy I loved his writing, it always seemed cheating somehow to skip the phase where Tarzan or John Carter learns to communicate with some totally alien culture. Let the players act it out, and don't let them put experience points into a language without at least some of the hard work that would go into earning it. (This is written by someone who spent two and a half years in Europe, and knows how challenging it is to communicate in a language you've never studied and have no translation dictionary for . . .)

First Humans

At some point, the party will have to encounter other humans swept to Yrth by the Banestorm. Will they link up or hate each other on sight? Perhaps the strangers will be hereditary enemies from Burgundy, or Viking warriors, or a helpless group of children, or even include the PCs' former overlord, after they've set up

their own little "kingdom." How will they react?

To Feed the Hungry

William was sitting sharpening his sword. He felt content, for the first time in many days. They'd finally gotten the hang of how to fight these "orcs," and he hadn't lost a man in over a week now. Things were going well. Therefore he smiled as a group of forlorn farmers walked up timidly to him. He'd been protecting these folk for a month now, and come to like them. William found them sturdy folk, willing to pitch in at tasks they'd never tried in order to keep the village alive. Not a coward among them, and William admired courage.

He waved them over benevolently, and asked what was on their mind. The answer came as a bit of shock, however. "We have no grain," they said. "It's almost time to plant seeds, and we don't have enough for all the people that came here. We've cleared enough land for the village's needs, but we don't know what to plant." William's spirits plummeted as he looked the leader of the farmer in the eye. "We'll all be dead by this time next year if we don't find some grain humans can grow and eat."

While adventurers rarely concern themselves with such mundane things, consider the plight of a village which was swept up without its seed-storage sheds. A medieval village lives or dies on the grain, bean, and vegetable crops it can grow. Most European villages of 900 years ago needed to plant four times what they could actually eat, in order to harvest enough for the village after birds, insects, varmints, and weather took their toll. If the community was brought to Yrth without its seeds, there may be trouble.

Of course, the GM can simply assume that there are native equivalents of wheat, lentils, cabbages, carrots, onions, etc. But how to find out which foods are edible? And how to get hold of a stock of seed in the planting season, since such seeds need to be harvested the previous autumn?

Gnomes are the likeliest established agricultural community on Yrth, but the player characters aren't going to know this. Halfling villages brought to Yrth are another possibility: given the Halfling love of food, they'll probably be overstocked with seeds. But finding them and getting them to share the seeds can be a multi-session adventure.

Beginnings of Power

After a few months or perhaps years of campaign time have elapsed, the players might begin to think in terms of creating a political state, with their characters as overlords. They may already be accepted as leaders of their own little village, and perhaps have recruited some lost and lonely humans they met in the woods. The initial orc problem is under control (though it will be many years before orcs really cease to be a thorn), land cultivation is under way, and the characters can take a moment to relax and remember the perquisites of wealth that they only peripherally, if at all, enjoyed.

Expanding a domain means raising and training an army and a constabulary, learning diplomacy, political intrigue, judicial proceedings, setting up a civil service, and so on. This type of campaign isn't for every GM or player, but is ambrosia to others!

Lewis and Clark

Eventually, the humans will want to know what's over the next hill. This may stem from dissatisfaction with their current conditions, or simply a desire to learn about any potential dangers. Exploring missions make great gaming sessions, and can be used to introduce anything ranging from a source of iron goods (the dwarves), Moslems, dark elves, a dragon, some alien race from *GURPS Aliens* – perhaps even with high technology!

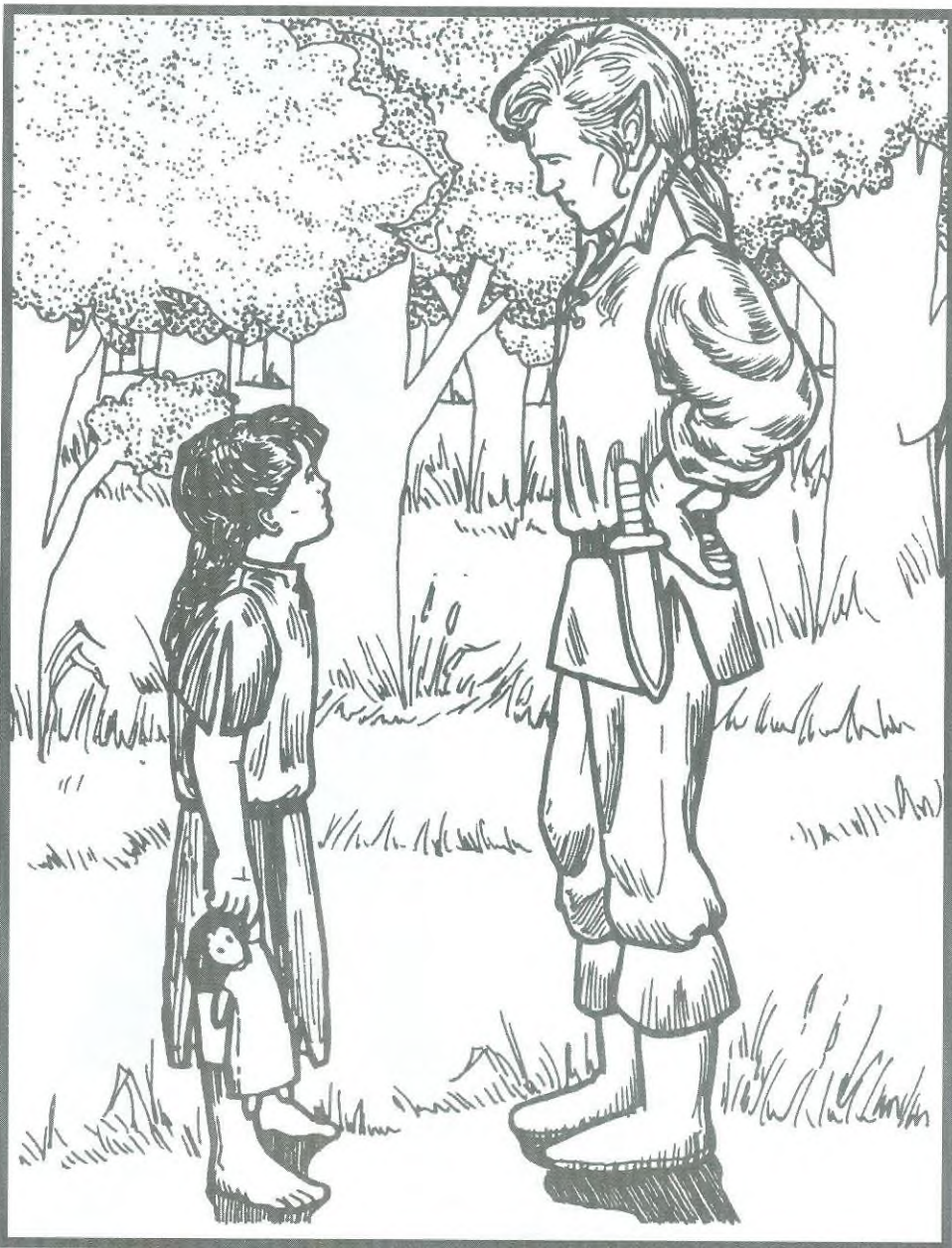
The Rival

After a while, the PCs encounter an unscrupulous, but powerful human who has begun to carve out his own empire. This can be before the PCs have attempted to do the same, in which case they will be treated very contemptuously, either forced to join or wiped out. Or it can be after the PCs have done the same thing, in which case there may be more diplomatic entreaties, which may include such niceties as poisoned wine or knives in the dark – or merely open warfare if their holdings look weak enough to subjugate easily. This person is determined to rule the

whole continent, and a few PCs aren't going to stand in his way!

Newcomers

Remember that the Banestorm is active for over a hundred years, according to *GURPS Fantasy*. This means that there will constantly be new arrivals. Not only is this a great way to introduce new players into the game, it allows for some interesting roleplaying situations. The newcomers can include some types listed above under *First Humans*, but they may encounter old sweethearts, family members, or even descendants!



COUNTY SEAT WARS

CAMPAIGNS

by Robert Collins

As I was researching my latest book, *Touring Elk & Chautauqua Counties*, I came across accounts of the county seat war that created the two counties. It then occurred to me: There were plenty of county seat “wars” in the West. PCs in a *GURPS Old West* (or any other Old West RPG) campaign ought to run into one or two during their adventures. Let me begin by telling you the story I discovered.

The Howard County Story

Howard County was part of the Osage Lands along the southern border of Kansas. The Indians were only residents until after the Civil War, then a trickle of pioneers began moving to the area, well to the south of Eureka. The government negotiated a treaty with the Osages in 1867, and a county was laid out. It was named for Civil War general O.O. Howard.

Elk Falls was first granted the status of county seat in 1870. But a group of young men from Osage Mission had a different idea. They founded a town called Boston some 4½ miles southwest of present-day Moline. Their new town was almost in the exact center of the county.

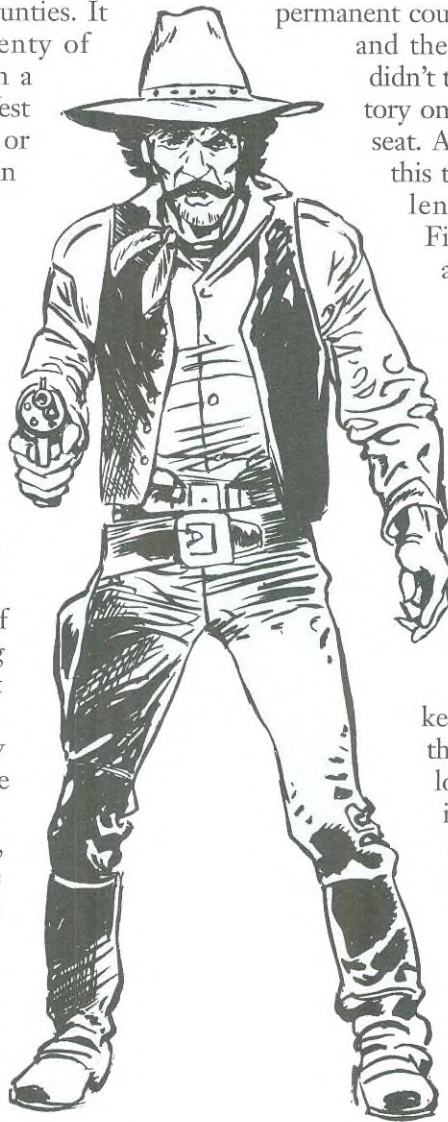
There was a spring west of the town, but it didn't come close to fulfilling the water needs of a town. The Bostonians tried to dig a well in the center of town, but they found no water. So, in secret so as not to hurt their chances of getting the county seat, water was poured into the well from the spring. The residents kept up the illusion that they had a fine well and plenty of water for a prosperous town.

Howard County had kept on growing in 1871 and 1872, so the citizens decided it was time to settle on a permanent county seat. An election was held in 1872, and the town of Peru won, although Boston didn't take part. Elk Falls contested Peru's victory on legal grounds, and they held onto the seat. Another election was held in 1873, and this time Boston won. Again Elk Falls challenged, and again they won in court. Finally, on November 17, 1873, Boston and Elk Falls faced each other at the ballot box over the Howard County seat.

Boston won, and apparently there was strong backing for it. Reports are that many residents from Howard City and Longton came to Boston to hail their victory. But there was no such sentiment in Elk Falls, whose residents suspected fraud. They went back to court, but not before the county clerk's office had already moved to Boston.

The Bostonians were determined to keep the seat out of Elk Falls any way they could. They offered town lots to a local judge (who happened to hold lots in Elk Falls). When the judge rejected the “bribe,” Boston organized a war party. On the morning of January 20, 1874, the war party attacked Elk Falls and captured all of the county records.

Elk Falls called out the sheriff. He went to Boston with a posse of 40 men two days later. The posse was barred from entry, and the Bostonians stonewalled the sheriff.



When the frustrated sheriff tried to arrest some Boston men, he was ordered to get out of town and not come back!

The next month, the sheriff called in Governor Thomas Osborne. Osborne enlisted a county militia and marched on Boston. He also had warrants sworn against every man in town. Faced with the governor and the prospect of being declared in open rebellion against the State of Kansas, Boston gave in. All the records were returned, and plans were made for a new, free and fair election.

During those contested months, the Howard County government was in total chaos. Only half the county taxes were collected: the county treasurer embezzled the other half. He managed to get away, but two Boston men who aided him were caught.

In the fall of 1874, Howard County went through one more election. By this time, however, it was agreed that the election should be about splitting the county. The voters decided in favor of division. The northern half of the county became Elk County, named for the Elk River, with Howard getting the county seat. The southern half became Chautauqua County, named for a county in New York, and Sedan won its seat. Most of Boston, which now sat close to the new county line, was moved to Howard. Within a decade, nothing was left of the little town that had fought so hard for the Howard County seat.

So Why Argue About a County Seat?

Good question. The issue of who would get the county seat wasn't just an arcane government matter; it was a matter of community survival.

The town that won the county seat would get all the county jobs. Those jobs would bring people to fill them, and those people would either bring or start families. This in turn stabilizes the town's basic businesses and encourages entrepreneurs to start others that need a larger population base to succeed.

This air of permanence and prosperity makes the town more attractive to a railroad. If the town isn't already connected, it will be, and the town fathers won't have to make as many financial promises to get it. The community's certain prospects are sure to attract competing lines, further steadying its future.

Conversely, losing the battle for county seat sealed the fate of many a small Western town. Towns that came out on the short end of the stick often became ghost towns, especially in sparsely-settled areas. The question of the county seat was often a matter of life or death for towns in the West of the 19th century.

Violence and threats of violence are part of these conflicts. When it's a matter of life or death for your town, you'll do almost anything to keep your town alive. While violence never exploded in Howard County,

it did in other conflicts, and sometimes people died. But it was never in anyone's best interest to let things get too out of control. Violence was often discouraged in favor of other tactics, like rigging elections, stumping in undecided areas, and filing legal briefs.

County Seat Conflicts & Old West Campaigns

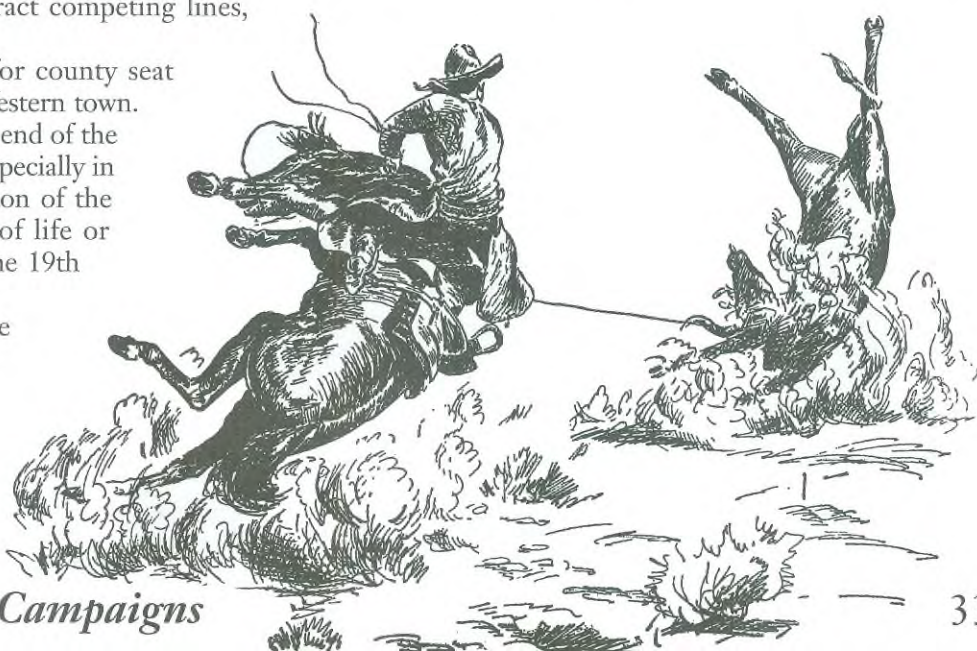
"County Seat Wars" provide good adventure opportunities in continuing campaigns. One side can hire the PCs as muscle, election officials (honest or otherwise), attorneys, or as all three. The other side can try to lure them away through threats or bribes. Alternately, they could be sent in as neutral arbitrators by a higher authority. It would be their job to restore order and make fair decisions, come hell or high water.

Adventuring in a county seat war could also be a way to start off a campaign. Again, they could be hired by one side or the other, or they could be sent in to calm passions. The adventures would give the PCs a chance to meet the NPCs, adjust to the region and investigate the background. Once the "war" was over, they could decide if they wanted to stay, and what they'll do as new residents. And don't forget that how they acted in the conflict might color their dealings with the locals.

A great advantage of using county-seat conflicts is that history is rife with examples of what real communities did to try to win the seat. A GM can use almost any book on ghost towns in a given state for adventure ideas. For example, *The Ghost Towns of Kansas* by Dan Fitzgerald would be good for a campaign in Kansas.

Also helpful are histories about states and counties, either in bookstores or libraries. Especially helpful to the GMs would be contemporary accounts of conflicts written soon after the events. Check the library or a museum for the older books, or the library for newly-published editions or updated versions.

A "county seat war" is a good way to liven up or initiate an *Old West* campaign. A little research, some rearranging of events, and your PCs will have hours of fun trying to find a permanent home for the county government.



A large, stylized pyramid with a glowing eye on its side, set against a background of a battle scene. The pyramid is composed of many small, glowing blocks. The eye is large and detailed, with a prominent pupil and iris. The background shows a chaotic battle scene with soldiers and weapons, rendered in a high-contrast, almost black and white style.

Can you ever have enough rules, enough options, enough possibilities?

We didn't think so either. Whether they add more realism or possibilities, or just keep players on their toes, the purpose of new rules is to, ultimately, make games more *fun*.

Here, then, are some of the more fun rules we've printed so far. From the realistic world of medieval economics to the fantastic world of animate guns, we probably have something here to spice up your game.

OPTIONAL RULES®

ANOTHER LOOK INSIDE WAREHOUSE 23

by Steve Jackson

DEPARTMENT OF PROCUREMENT AND CONTAINMENT
DIVISION 23



Ed -

I agree that we might as well stand down and start catching up on sleep. A complete report, along with the briefcase itself, will follow by normal channels, but it's been a long two days, the intruder is dead, the place is secure, and I'm in no shape to finish a proper report now.

We still don't know how he got in. If you can get any kind of ID on him, that might give us some clues.

Captain Jacoby volunteered to open the intruder's briefcase. He used Lab 7, which is at the end of a long corridor, in case it was booby-trapped. It had a normal 3-number combination lock. Jacoby just started at 000 and worked up. It opened on 432. The briefcase itself seems to be a perfectly normal, off-the-shelf Samsonite model. I will be recommending Jacoby for some kind of a commendation, but now that he's seen all this stuff, he won't be getting any more leaves for a while.

I'm glad we didn't panic and blow this thing up. The original thinking was that it might contain germs or gas, and we were expected to destroy it explosively and spread the contents. But what we've got here must be his working tools. The briefcase contained:

- (1) A 3 1/2" computer disk, unlabeled. We have not examined it. Maybe we're being too cautious, but what if his whole objective was to get this disk into one of our systems?
- (2) A small climbing grapnel. The metal is green and the rope is gray. We think he used this to get over the walls. There's at least 20 feet of retractable rope that fits "inside" the grapnel somehow. I never saw anything like this.
- (3) Two ziplock plastic bags. Each one contains a red leather collar, 18" long, with metal studs. We have not opened the bags.

The body of the intruder will be shipped per your instructions. The clothing seems ordinary. He had nothing in his pockets, and no jewelry except for a small crystal - Anderssen says it's smoky quartz - on a neck chain. I'm sending that with the briefcase. I'm also sending his belt. It looks completely ordinary, but he took it off for some reason - he dropped it when he ran from the guards at the Gamma security door.

Whoever gets to analyze the contents of that briefcase is going to have a very interesting time. If it falls into your players' hands, here's what they will be dealing with:

A Godzillion Gigs

An ordinary-looking floppy disk - it could be any type, even an old-style one. Or perhaps a CD-ROM . . . or whatever the standard storage medium is for the campaign. The notes on the label seem interesting enough that someone, no doubt snooping where he's not invited, will pick it up. The surprise comes when the disk is put into a computer and read. Its formatting is compatible with a common operating system. But it contains a ridiculous amount of storage space . . . thousands of times what it should. About half of that space is empty.

The disk can be used indefinitely. It will not wear out, and will survive ordinary mishaps like spilled coffee. The files on it can be deleted and the space re-used. If the disk is reformatted, though, it will have only the storage space of a normal disk, and if it's taken apart, it will die. If it's taken to a computer professional, the rumor could eventually get back to whoever the disk was stolen from, leading to trouble.

Climbing Grapnel

A small three-clawed grapnel. The metal has a greenish luster, and the points are very sharp. About a foot of dark-gray rope connects it to an oval ring of the same metal. The rope seems to be a textured monofilament, and is socketed into the metal at both ends. The ring rotates on the rope, clicking against smooth but fairly heavy resistance into two positions. When the ring is in one position, pulling on the rope will yield more rope . . . at least a half-mile of it. The rope emerges smoothly from the metal with almost no resistance. The more rope comes out, the more the whole thing will weigh if placed on a scale. Once 20 feet of rope has appeared, the free-hanging weight of the rope and ring is enough to pull more rope out.

When the ring is clicked to the other position, the system is locked. Once the rope is extended, a firm pressure on the top of the grapnel, between the hooks, will reel it in at 8 feet per second. It will lift only 2 pounds of additional weight, plus its own length (no matter how great that length is). Retraction stops when there is a foot of rope left.

The grapnel points would bend at 100 tons, and the ring at the base would stretch and break at 220; neither of these would affect the grapnel's ability to produce and receive rope. The rope itself, if knotted, could support 405 tons of weight. The rope cannot be frayed or cut, nor the grapnel damaged, by any force short of a deliberate attack with heavy weapons; the GM may simply declare it invulnerable if he likes. If the rope breaks or is cut, it will vanish into gas and smoke, leaving two bits of metal and no clues.

Belt

It looks like an ordinary leather belt – 34 inches long, 1.25" across, black, slightly worn, with a conservative square brass-colored buckle. In this form, it could be cut, punched or torn, if anyone were so inclined.

But when the buckle is clicked back so that it lies along the belt, the flexible leather suddenly becomes rock-solid. The exterior remains slightly yielding, but the core becomes completely stiff and as strong as any space-age metal. The buckle itself remains ordinary metal – don't subject it to any ridiculous stresses, because if it breaks, the belt is locked in whichever form it was in at the time.

If enough weight were put on the belt – and it is at least strong enough to support the weight of a Main Battle Tank while formed into a hook – it would snap. The part with the buckle would retain its abilities; the rest would seem to be inert leather.

Training Collar

An animal collar, apparently of thin, modestly studded leather. It's big enough to be worn by a lion or bear, but designed with extra loops so it could wrap twice around the neck of an average-sized dog without looking silly.

Each collar comes with a matching crystal, which could be set into a headband, necklace or key chain, depending on how showy the owner wants to be.

The wearer of the collar (animal or human) will at all times feel friendly and submissive toward the wearer of the crystal. It will follow any instruction that it understands, and it will do its best to understand. The collar

does not make an animal any smarter, but it has an effective +1 to IQ for training purposes, because it will have a very good attitude . . . as long as the wearer of the crystal is the one doing the training. The collar will not make a savage animal any safer around those other than the crystal wearer!

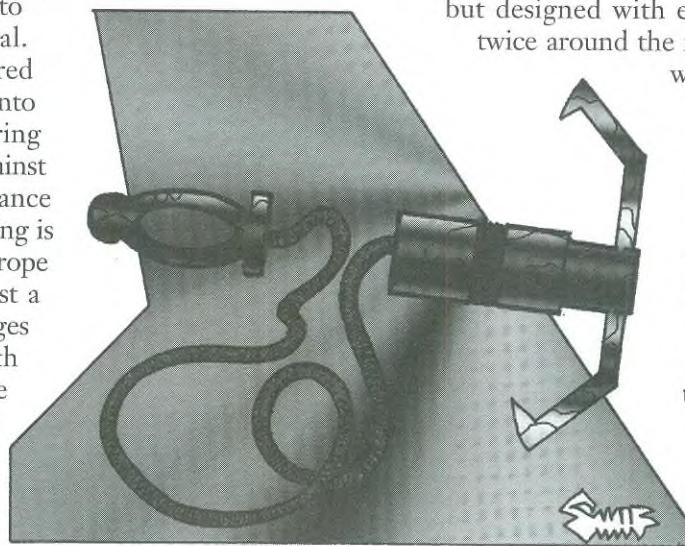
If the crystal changes hands, the effect transfers to the new owner.

The effect lasts only as long as both the collar and crystal are worn. If the collar is removed or the crystal is lost or changes hands, the "slave" creature will remember past events. What happens then will depend on the nature of the creature and how it was treated. Only an intelligent creature is likely to resent its slavery and want revenge. A dog or horse, on the other hand, would probably have learned the habit of obedience and, if well treated, would remain reliable. A cat or bear might still look to its former master for food but would be much less likely to follow orders. A Komodo dragon might just walk away, but might try to eat its former owner if it was hungry at the moment. And so on.

Some few collars come with multiple crystals, so a creature can have more than one master. Likewise, some crystals are attuned to more than one collar. However, there seems to be no limit to the number of different crystals that one individual can wear.

Another table . . .

1,1 – Handcuffs, made to the standard Smith & Wesson pattern, but with the words "STAY-ON" as a maker's mark. The steel has a slight gold tint, if, indeed, it's steel. The metal cannot be cut by any force that would not annihilate the cuffs' wearer. There is no key. There is a keyhole, but it's a dummy. Once on, they are on to stay.



1,2 – Shoe of Infinite Marbles. The shoe is a used but wearable Nike brand athletic shoe with a red swoosh. The marbles are mostly cheap glass “cats-eyes,” though one in 120 is a real aggie. You may reach into the shoe at any time and get a marble. If the shoe is upside down, one marble will fall out every 0.8 seconds.

1,3 – It looks like a standard U.S. highway sign. It says “Denver 320.” Nothing unusual will be noticed about the sign unless it is moved. But it always gives the correct mileage to Denver, wherever it is placed.

1,4 – A souvenir from a parallel world where Halloween is the big holiday of the year. They look like ordinary Christmas lights, but they are all orange, and a little box on the end makes cheesy electronic ghost noises when anyone comes within 7 feet.

1,5 – A device like a palmtop computer, but the screen glows red-orange. There are only six keys: Y, N, 1, 0, On/Off and Restart. When picked up, the screen lights with DO YOU WISH TO CONTINUE? Y/N. If Y is entered, the screen dims, but will light again for the next person to pick it up. If N is entered, the user’s heart stops. He will revive if Restart is pressed within 3 minutes. The on/off key works normally; the others have no visible effect.

1,6 – Something like a small TV remote control, but with only four buttons. Three are side by side – one is red, one is yellow, one is green. If the device is pointed at any traffic signal within 220 feet, and the appropriate button pushed, the traffic light will instantly switch to that color, and lights connected to it will switch appropriately. The fourth button is square and black. It will cause a signal to quit working completely.

2,1 – A small hand-held device; a handwritten tag says MUTANT DETECTOR AC2034. If it is pointed at any living being it will beep and a light will glow blue. There are several other lights which will not light up at all. (Replacing the standard C cell inside might make a difference.)

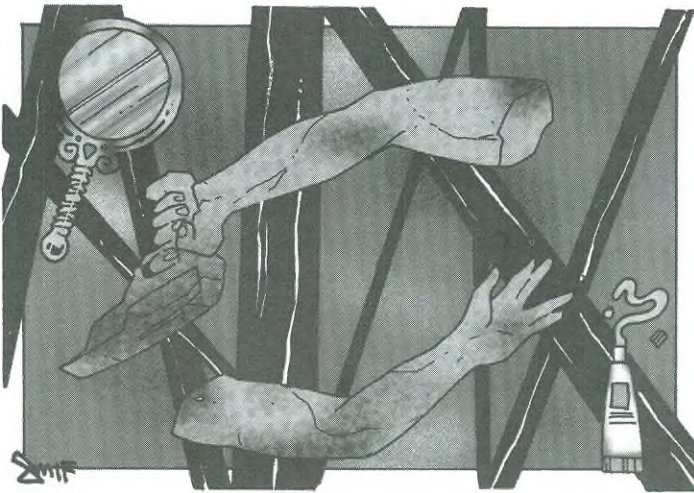
2,2 – Several dozen small spherical green pills. Each one, dissolved in a gallon of water, will turn it into a gallon of high-test gas.

2,3 – A badly photocopied set of instructions for building a carburetor that will make any car get at least 100 miles per gallon on regular gas. In the same box is a sample; it is obviously not factory-made. The instructions are accurate and the device works.

2,4 – 1994 and 1995 U.S. tax returns for the current Pope, showing a home address in Long Island.

2,5 – A pair of ordinary-looking 6-sided dice which will throw any combination the thrower thinks of. They have exactly 59 uses left in them. After that, they become ordinary dice. There is absolutely no documentation with them, of course.

2,6 – A small cardboard box containing a chunk of blue-flecked granite the size of a small walnut. Nothing unusual will be noticed without a radiation detector – which will scream! Anyone carrying the unshielded rock on their person will take 10 rads per hour. Just being in the same room with it is good for 2 rads an hour. However, the green cardboard box which contains the rock is – as long as it remains intact – as effective a radiation shield as a foot of lead. You could safely carry plutonium in it.



3,1 – A vial marked “Dehydrated Water – Just Add Water.” It contains a small amount (about a gram) of very fine crystalline material. If water is added, more water will be generated. The dehydrated water will “multiply” the water added to it by a factor of 11, and have no further effect. There is enough here

to make 110 gallons of water out of 10 gallons.

3,2 – A foot-long tree branch. It has no bark; the wood has a silky texture and a medium red color. It was cut off at an angle, presenting an interesting grain. The leaves are green and alive, and will stay that way indefinitely; the plant is subsisting on the moisture and nutrients from the air. The species is not similar to anything known by any Earthly botanist.

3,3 – A pair of sunglasses that admit no light at all, unless the user happens to be looking at the sun from within the orbit of Mercury.

3,4 – A tube of ointment marked “Hair Remover” in oddly spelled French and German. It works perfectly and permanently; if it’s applied to the skin, the hair will melt away instantly and will never, ever grow there again. The ointment is green and minty-smelling, acid-tasting if eaten but nontoxic.

3,5 – A smiley-face pin with a psi transmitter in it. Everyone within 10 feet of the pin has a +1 reaction to everything at all times.

3,6 – A hand mirror that shows the user his own skull. In general, the flesh of any living being reflected in the mirror seems transparent; bones, cyberware, etc., can be seen within.

4,1 – A small, dried-up dead fish with traces of a waxy substance in its mouth and its sunken eyes.

4,2 – The plastic-wrapped body of a 12-year-old girl in a blue dress. If the wrapping is removed, she will awaken. Her name is Helen Chambers, and the last thing she remembers is stepping into the corner drugstore in a suburb of Toledo in 1962. She will not be willing to return to the wrapper, and it won't work anyway.

4,3 – A small tuning fork that makes no visible sound. When it is struck, everyone within about 40 feet (twice that for children, much more for dogs) gets a stabbing headache that lasts about 10 seconds and fades to a dull ache.

4,4 – A gallon of Neapolitan ice cream. The brand is unfamiliar. The carton is at room temperature, but the ice cream inside is at the perfect cold temperature for eating.

4,5 – A pair of life-sized white marble arms, broken from a statue. There are traces of red paint on the fingernails, and their pose will be very familiar to anyone who remembers the Venus de Milo. The left hand holds what can only be described as a ray gun (also marble, of course), while the right is making a very peculiar gesture. Both hands have six fingers.

4,6 – A badly photocopied pamphlet on yellow paper. It describes how to raise a crop of brown paper grocery bags by asexual reproduction.

5,1 – A small vial marked “Universal Solvent.” There is a hole in the bottom. Examination will reveal matching holes in the box it was in and the warehouse floor.

5,2 – A small bag made of a greenish, fibrous material. It has an unwholesome and variable sheen, as though parts of it were wet. It contains fifty small candies. The red ones are in the shape of an obscene tentacled monstrosity, and are cherry-flavored. The green ones seem to be triangular, but contain six right angles, two of which are clearly obtuse. They are lime with a hint of peppermint.

5,3 – A black wax candle in the shape of a human head, life-sized, tilted back at an angle so it stares upward. It has two wicks, one where each eye would be.

5,4 – A 1997 calendar with 15 oddly-named months ranging from 22 to 45 days long, but using the normal 7-day week. The normal holidays are printed in red, on dates which would correspond to their location on a “real” calendar, along with two others: “Ascension,” on the 15th of Payment (which corresponds to September 6), and “Cleansing,” the first four days of Expansion (November 12 through 15).

5,5 – A plastic plaque, bright red and completely featureless, about an inch by two inches. Anyone who picks it up will hear (in his head) a woman’s voice saying “Bread. Cheese. Two packages of horses. Selenium.”

5,6 – A coil of coppery-looking wire about the diameter of a pencil lead. It is extremely flammable and can be lit with a match. It burns much hotter than magnesium, with a blue flare that dazzles anyone who looks at it.

6,1 – A spray can. The contents smell like air freshener. It’s really a powerful “truth serum.” One spritz will treat an ordinary-sized room; the spray persists for 24 hours if the door is closed. Anyone who breathes the stuff must roll vs. (Will-6) to avoid saying exactly what is on his mind, and (IQ-2) to notice that he has suddenly become completely truthful. The effects last about three minutes after the victim quits breathing the spray.

6,2 – A torn-off tag reading “Three wishes, but all must be for eye makeup.” It is not obvious what it was attached to.

6,3 – A box of dried gourds which are half-size replicas of the heads of various world leaders of the Forties and Fifties.

6,4 – A plastic replica of a hot-air balloon, just a couple of inches high, complete with a little basket and a little aeronaut. There is a wind-up knob. When the balloon is wound up and released, it floats about 5 feet into the air and bobs around, whirring as it unwinds, and then gently floats down. A sticker on the bottom says “Made in Korea” in mirror writing.

6,5 – The wallet or pocketbook (or equivalent) of the person who reached into the box. Nothing in it has been disturbed. There is no clue how it got into the sealed box.

6,6 – A duplicate of the wallet or pocketbook (or equivalent) of the person who reached into the box. The original is still in his pocket. Except . . . on closer examination, it will be clear that the one from the box was the original, and the one the person was carrying around was a clever but imperfect fake.



Warrior Monks

The Military Holy Orders of the Crusades by Salvatore T. Falco

The histories of the Knights Templar and Knights Hospitallers provide a wealth of material for both historical and fantasy roleplaying. These organizations sprang from humble beginnings to provide the western world some of its first disciplined armies since the legions of the Roman Empire, amassing great power and wealth in the process. A strictly historical game set during the Crusades can make good use of their histories, but fantasy games can take truly creative approaches.

Origins

In the 12th century, the new vocation of warrior monk grew out of a combination of the new demand for a more dynamic, active Christianity and the success of the first Crusade. Fighting in defense of Christianity became widely accepted as another path to spiritual salvation, paving the way for the foundation of the first military holy order: the Poor Fellow-Soldiers of Christ and the Temple of Solomon, or Knights Templar.

Of all the Crusader orders, the haughty and powerful Knights Templar is most well known, yet its origin is much humbler than its eventual power and wealth might suggest. In 1118, Hugh dePayns and eight other knights took vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, pledging to fight not for booty or personal glory, but for the glory of Christ. The Templars offered to protect pilgrims traveling in the holy land, a sorely needed service. Since pilgrims brought wealth to the Crusader states and the Church alike, both had a stake in protecting them from the bandits and raiders that plagued the route to Jerusalem.

King Baldwin II of Jerusalem provided the order a portion of the al-Aqsa Mosque on the supposed site of Solomon's Temple to use as a headquarters. The Church recognized the order within a decade, and the Knights Templar were born.

Unlike the well-documented rise of the Templars, little specific evidence for the origin of the Knights Hospitaller exists. The Hospital was founded sometime before the first Crusade as a refuge for the poor and sick who traveled to and in the Holy Land.

In 1113, Pope Paschal II declared the Hospital an independent order of the Church. By the middle of the 12th century, the Hospital took up arms. Fighting grew out of its mission to care for the sick and the poor; the Templars and other Crusaders could not be expected to be everywhere at once.

Within decades after their foundation, the military orders experienced explosive growth in wealth, holdings and power. Enthusiasm for the Crusades had spilled over into approval for the fledgling orders; donations poured into their coffers.

In many cases, donors needing military assistance would grant land on their borders, providing themselves with relatively cheap defense. Other donors sought to purchase prayers for themselves or their families. Eventually both orders became wealthy enough to sustain themselves and increase their power through banking. The Templars began making loans as early as 1135, and both orders soon began providing an array of financial services, building their wealth even more rapidly.

Destruction of the Templars and the Decline of the Military Orders

If the rise of the military orders had been meteoric, the fall of one, the Knights Templar, was spectacular. The story is well known: on October 13, 1307, King Philip IV of France had every member of the Templar order in France arrested on charges of heresy, sodomy and idolatry. The arrests destroyed Templar power in France while the accusations destroyed any ability other European Templars might have had to ally with other Christian rulers against Philip.

The exact accusations brought against the Templars ran several pages in length. Essentially they can be summarized under three headings: various acts of heresy, idolatry and homosexuality. The most frequent charges were that the Templars forced recruits to deny some or all of the orthodox beliefs concerning the divinity and perfection of Christ. Charges of idol worship claimed that the Templars worshiped an idol of a three-faced or three-headed cat called Baphomet from which they supposedly gained magical powers. Homosexuality charges fit into two categories: outright sodomy between members, and forcing recruits at their initiation to give the Master three "obscene kisses," one each on the lips, penis and buttocks.

These charges have drawn tremendous debate, but their veracity is unlikely. No physical evidence of idol worship was ever found, and had the Templars practiced the things they were accused of they would hardly have escaped detection for so long. It was not unheard of for a brother to transfer to another order, or to leave the order to return to secular life. Given the contemporary attitudes toward breaking vows, such a man would certainly have revealed heresy to justify his departure. None did. Finally, although many Templars confessed to the charges, their confessions were extracted through torture. The confessions are contradictory, implying that the brothers were simply saying whatever the inquisitors wanted to hear in order to escape further torture.



If the Templars were innocent, what motive could Philip have had for orchestrating such an atrocity? The Crusades had drained his treasury and he owed a considerable debt to the Templars. The easiest way to shore up France's flagging financial resources would be to eliminate its debt by destroying its largest creditor and assuming control of Templar resources. Philip thus chose charges that would eliminate the Templars' secular autonomy and allow him to seize Templar property and treasuries. The charges also obligated his fellow monarchs to turn on the order as well.

That a Christian monarch could attack and destroy one of Christendom's foremost defenders shows how far the esteem of the military orders had fallen. The fall of Acre, in 1291, had served as a death blow to their already flagging reputations. Their "approval rating" had always depended on the various Crusades' successes. Now criticism reached new heights.

Frequently, the orders were criticized on the basis of their accumulated wealth. Neither Templars nor Hospitallers maintained as many knights in the Holy Land as their funds would have allowed. Many people thought that this avarice accounted for the Christian losses in the Holy Land. Another problem was the discord between the orders themselves (Templars and Hospitallers sometimes fought in the streets over issues as petty as claims to mills), which was also assumed to have contributed to Christian losses.

But the Crusading ideal was dying anyway. European nobles had run out of money for crusading and had more pressing problems closer to home. Without the Crusades, the orders had no *raison d'être*. Without a mission and with donations declining, the orders faded away.

Military Orders in Roleplaying Campaigns

There are a variety of uses for military orders in roleplaying. The strictly historical game is the most obvious, and Game Masters and players alike have a wealth of source material to draw on. A more interesting approach would be to include the elements of fantasy roleplaying. How would these

military orders behave in a world with non-human races, fantastic monsters and magic? It is important to keep in mind the medieval psyche, which believed in magic, fantastic creatures, and the workings of unseen spirits. The witchcraft charge made against the Templars would never have been useful had not magic appeared real to the medieval mind. After all, both the Bible and Church teachings warn against witchcraft. Why would the Word of God warn against the practice of something that didn't exist?

This is not to say, however, that a Templar or Hospitaller would be completely blasé in the face of sorcery or fantastic creatures. Believing in something is entirely different from coming face to face with it, and initial encounters would call for (at least) Fright Checks. First contact with non-human races could be similarly traumatic, depending on the circumstances.

Game Masters must answer some questions for a historical-fantastic campaign. Most important is how much magic will be allowed. A military order campaign would work best against a fantastic (moderate amounts of magic) rather than a mythic (high levels of magic) background. In the medieval view, magic is subtle and mysterious. Game Masters should carefully select what spells they will allow in either type of campaign. After all, the Templars were accused of trafficking with evil spirits, not tossing around fireballs!

Spells should be restricted to the less spectacular spells from the *GURPS Basic Set*. If spells from *GURPS Magic* are to be used at all, they should be limited to the subtler spells in the Body Control, Illusion and Creation, Plant, and Sound colleges. Using the spells with less obvious effects remains true to the medieval view; allowing the spells from the colleges in *GURPS Magic* allows a little more flexibility for both GM and players, if PCs can use magic.

The magic system in *GURPS Voodoo* is perfect for a dark campaign in which the accusations of idol worship and witchcraft are true. Finally, the GM might consult *GURPS Arabian Nights* for an extensive discussion of the nature of and attitude toward magic in Arabic cultures, if the campaign will be set in the Holy Land with frequent contact with Arabs.

More overt spell-casting presents a challenge. Assuming that he has not already been exposed to magic, how does the average warrior monk react when he sees

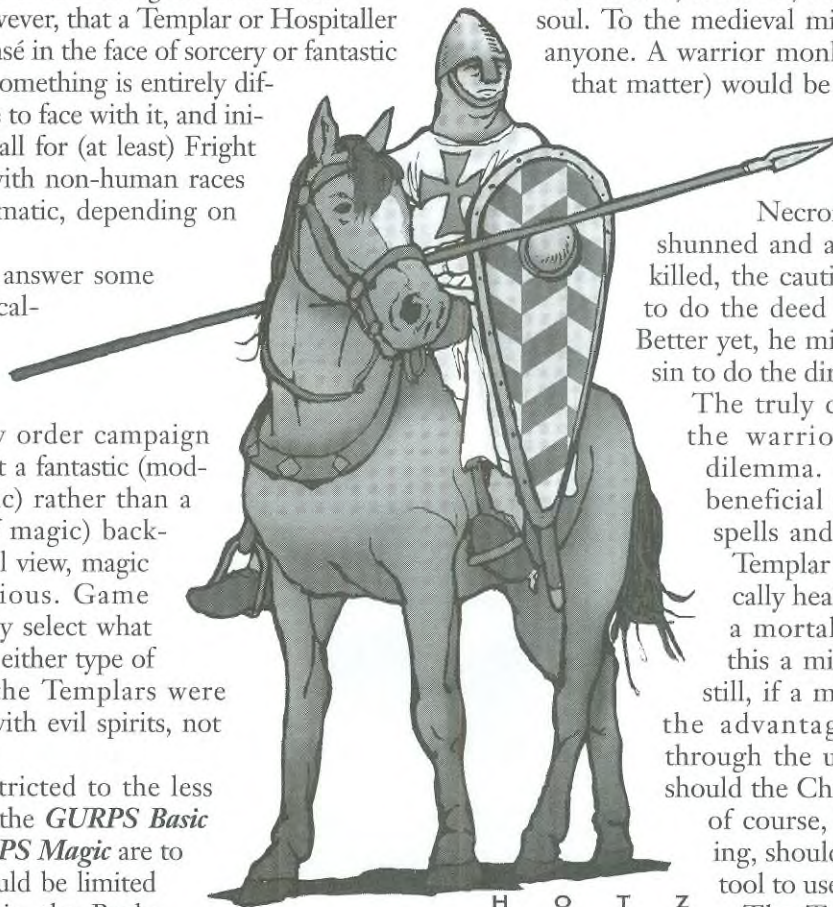
someone cast a fireball that destroys an entire cavalry unit? At the very least, the character should have to make a Fright Check at a considerable penalty. If he makes his Fright Check, he is likely to seek to attack and destroy the spell-caster, unless it is tactically impossible to do so. Assured of entry into Heaven in the next life, the holy warrior is not likely to fear death at the hand of violent magic.

He would, however, fear the damnation of his soul. To the medieval mind, a curse could affect anyone. A warrior monk (or any Christian, for that matter) would be unlikely to risk his soul by offending someone who might be able to damn him.

Necromancers are likely to be shunned and avoided. If one must be killed, the cautious warrior would seek to do the deed while the enemy slept. Better yet, he might try to hire an assassin to do the dirty work for him.

The truly crafty GM will present the warrior monk PCs with a dilemma. What is the nature of beneficial magic, such as healing spells and the like? What does a Templar do if he awakens, magically healed after having received a mortal wound in combat? Is this a miracle or a curse? Better still, if a magic-using enemy gains the advantage on the battlefield through the use of arcane arts, what should the Christian warrior do? Pray, of course, but if that avails nothing, should he take up the enemy's tool to use it against him?

The Templars, in spite of the accusations against them, might be less willing to adopt such strategies. They were always the most resistant to change. The Knights of the Hospital, on the other hand, were a very adaptable group, as evidenced by their shift from non-military to military, their eventual transformation into a naval power and their very survival to the present day (as the Knights of Malta). They might be quick to realize the benefits of magic and adopt its use. Since typical fantasy magic has an almost scientific approach (use the proper components and say the proper incantation, you get a given result), a sorcerer might, with a good enough fast-talk, be able to convince warriors that what they think of as "magic" is simply a natural result. Perhaps an order's Grand Master would come to that conclusion by himself.



Over time, the entire order might adopt the use of magic, either for healing or for more impressive battle magic. Different orders likely would specialize in different colleges.

Magic is only part of High Fantasy roleplaying, though. Monsters and non-human races are also staples of the genre. Both could present interesting twists.

Monsters might cause fright checks as unsuspecting Crusaders come upon terrifying apparitions. They might also become the objects of quests. More significantly, their appearance might be taken as omens that could launch whole new Crusades. In Christian mythology, the appearance of a dragon signified the imminent fall of a kingdom. A dragon's sudden appearance over the skies of Jerusalem might be taken as foretelling the kingdom's fall to Moslem forces. Since dragons were identified with Satan, an appearance might also trigger a witch-hunt as Christians in the Holy Land try to discover who has summoned the forces of darkness.

The appearance of monsters would not affect the warrior's mind set or world view, though. Monsters were assumed to exist, and though they might be frightening, a medieval warrior would probably accept them as natural parts of creation (if only as something to be slain and displayed as a trophy). Far more problematic would be an encounter with a "sapient monster," or intelligent non-human race.

Some non-humans, such as Fishmen, are obviously races with which Christians of any occupation would refuse to have business. Races that preyed on humans would be viewed as abominations, and any community found would be destroyed. Some races, like Reptile Men and Insect Men, are not inherently inimical to humanity, but the medieval mind would find them abhorrent nonetheless. Their sheer strangeness would mark them a mockery of human form and thus the devil's spawn.

Other races that are staples of fantasy, however, would present more challenging problems in perception. What would medieval man have made of the typical fantasy elf, dwarf or halfling?

Most likely, these three races would simply be viewed as odd humans, unless the longevity of the former two became known. None are so odd that they couldn't pass for humans of unusual shape or size. The problem would arise not because of their appearance, but because of their beliefs. Elves and dwarves have their own religions that differ

greatly from Christianity. They would not likely accept any human religion, and this would brand them as infidels. They might not be treated as poorly as Moslems, unless they held some territory that Christians wanted. Elves are the most likely to suffer a Crusade, then, living as they tend to in highly desirable forested areas. Dwarven territory would have little appeal to the average Crusader – although their mines might be very attractive prizes, indeed.

Based on their reactions to the non-Moslem natives of the Holy Land, each order might respond differently to the idea of accepting non-human races into their ranks. Here it is the Templars who would be most likely to adapt. Historically, the Templars used light horse troops called "Turkoples" (young men whose mothers were native and fathers were European) as support units. Non-nobles sometimes joined the order as "sergeants" – lower in rank than a full brother knight, but no less valuable on the field of battle. Templars might use non-human races in a similar manner.

The Hospitallers would be less flexible here. Historically, they rarely allowed non-Europeans to join their ranks. Non-humans would be unthinkable. They might decide that the Bible speaks of salvation for humans, saying nothing of these filthy parodies of humanity. They must be from the devil. Such a difference in opinion could contribute to the split between Templars and Hospitallers.

Of course, admission to any order would require acceptance of Christianity. Congenial and more pragmatic, some halflings might actually consent to become Christians, and would be entitled to enter some orders. Only nobility could

become brothers, but most orders,

including the Templars and Hospitallers, accepted common

fighters as sergeants or auxiliary troops. Halflings would be the

most likely non-human race to assimilate with Christian culture.

They might make excellent behind-the-scenes workers.

Banking activities require clerks, for example, and even the most

holy warrior needs someone to help him tend his mount and equipment.

Goblins might also manage to gain acceptance and would make excel-

lent shock troops (or cannon fodder).

The ability of a race to be tolerated by the orders depends on a combination of two factors. Its willingness to accept Christianity is the major one. Even if one or two members of a race convert, a massive racial



resistance to the faith would cause the Church to declare the race an infidel race. At best, members of an infidel race who converted could perhaps find employment in a Christian household, but would be unlikely to be allowed to fulfill any church function. For example, a Christian elf would be an oddity, and he would not be allowed to enter the priesthood.

The second factor is the race's appearance. Those races that appear closest to the human norm would be more likely to find acceptance. Other races, such as orcs or kobolds, would be considered abominations – mockeries of humanity and therefore infernal in origins. The Church would be unlikely even to admit that these races had souls. The best they could hope to be treated would be as highly intelligent animals. More likely they would be enslaved or exterminated.

Regardless of non-humans' ultimate status, roleplaying an initial encounter could be a challenge for even the best roleplayers. Likewise, the addition of monsters and magic to a quasi-historical game with historically accurate Christian holy warriors could provide a fascinating campaign.

Warrior Monks for GURPS

Warrior monks are easy to build as *GURPS* characters. The vows and requirements of the standard Templar or Hospitaller fit well into the *GURPS* advantages and disadvantages. The cost is steep, however. Including disadvantages, the minimum requirements cost a whopping 99 points! The standard 100-point *GURPS* player-character is obviously insufficient; build a Templar or Hospitaller on a minimum of 150 points. This represents a new recruit. Veterans should be built on 200 points or more.

The character's order furnishes him with all his equipment: a full suit of chain armor; a helmet; shoes; a coat of arms to be worn over the armor; a broadsword (thrusting, for *GURPS* purposes); a lance; a "kite" (a triangular wooden shield, "large" in *GURPS* terms, covered with leather); and three knives, two for fighting and one for table use. Brother knights are also furnished with three horses and two blankets, a heavy one for winter and a light one for summer. In order to fight loaded

down with close to 75 pounds of equipment, the character should have a ST of at least 13 (30 points), DX of 12 (20 points) and a HT of 11 or more (10 points).

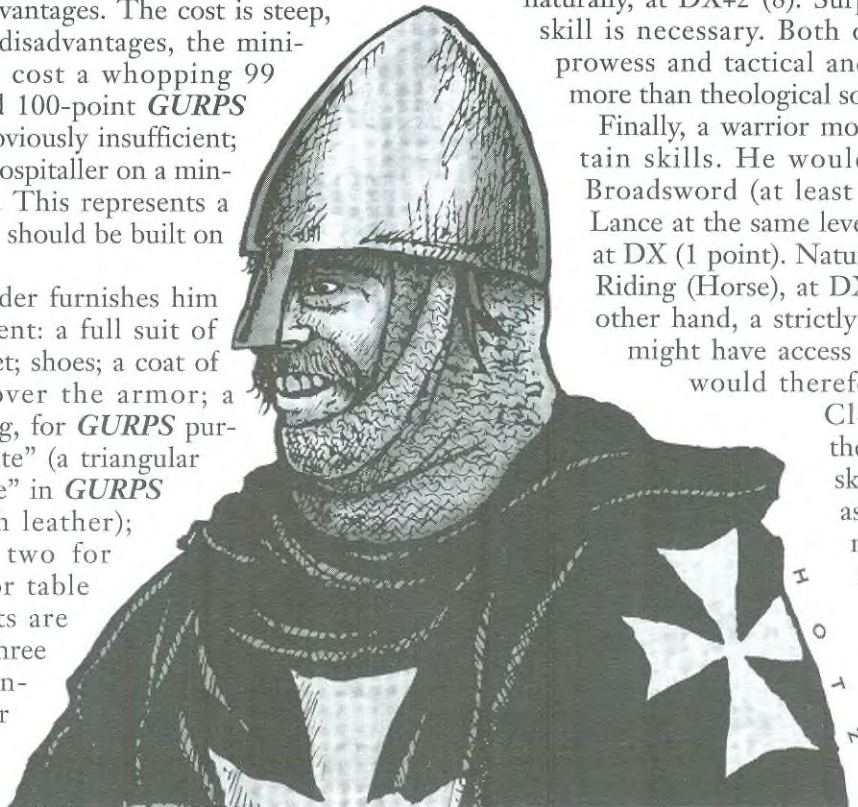
Needless to say, the order serves as a Patron. Each chapter is a group with significant assets, supplies equipment worth more than starting wealth, and appears on a 12-. A -15 point Duty to the Order (all the time) is included and reduces the cost somewhat (25 points). A warrior monk should have Clerical Investment (5 points). If the campaign makes magic available, the character might purchase Magery 1 (15 points). He must also purchase three levels of Status (15 points).

A member of either order has sworn to live by its Rule, with a vow of poverty, chastity and obedience. Obedience is covered in the Duty inherent in the Patron advantage. Chastity is a minor vow (-5) and Poverty is at the -15 point level. The character also has Intolerant towards all other religions (-10). Fanaticism would be appropriate, as would a Sense of Duty towards Christians. Alcoholism, drug dependence and social disadvantages such as Lecherousness and Compulsive Gambling would not be appropriate.

Finally, a warrior monk must purchase certain skills. He would be proficient with a Broadsword (at least DX+2, 8 points) and Lance at the same level (8), and Knife at DX (1). He should be able to ride his horse, naturally, at DX+2 (8). Surprisingly, no Theology skill is necessary. Both orders prized combat prowess and tactical and strategic know-how more than theological sophistication.

Finally, a warrior monk must purchase certain skills. He would be proficient with Broadsword (at least DX+2, 8 points) and Lance at the same level (8 points), and Knife at DX (1 point). Naturally, he should possess Riding (Horse), at DX+2 (8 points). On the other hand, a strictly fantasy game's monks might have access to clerical magic, and would therefore need to purchase

Clerical Investment at the 10-point level. Other skills or advantages, such as Literacy or Theology, might be required. For a good example of this, see the Order of St. George of the Dragon in *GURPS Fantasy*.





"Oh? And how much more will this, ab, information cost me?"

This was it. The moment. From now on, he would be in with privs. Deep breath; just say it. "One million marks."

One excited heartbeat thudded past.

Mr. Johnson burst into gales of laughter. Sickening realization twisted Ether Oar's guts: he had just revealed far too much.

"For a minute there," Johnson gasped out, "I thought you were ready for the big time, kid. Skorzy, pay the kid."

The one that Ether Oar had mentally dubbed Goon #3 stepped forward, his hand going into his coat. Ether Oar thought about telling him to move slowly, but decided that was useless. He had no weapon himself. His mind was his weapon. His mind and his cyberdeck. Skorzy's hand came out holding a wallet, anyway. A wallet? For a million marks? Then Skorzy's other hand slammed into his solar plexus, and Ether Oar's priorities were rearranged. Breathing was at the top of the list. He could not resist as they bundled him into the van.

They didn't take him anywhere; Skorzy just bound him quickly with duct tape. Then things got weird. Taking him in a head-lock, Skorzy attached a jack to Ether Oar's interface plug and carefully taped the cord to his head. Through the familiar vertigo of plugged-in-but-not-connected, his mind raced. Were they actually going to let him log in? Then he noticed that the cord was connected to the deck through a crudely drilled hole in the top. What had they done to their cyberdeck? Another interface cord ran from the usual port on the front to a figure in the darkness.

"Dump him," Johnson ordered. Their netrunner giggled in the shadows, a high, frightening sound, and poked the deck's keypad once.

Ether Oar screamed!

BRAIN HACKING

A Diabolical New Skill for GURPS Cyberpunk

By Sean Barrett

Anyone with a high-bandwidth data port, designed for the direct input of artificial signals to his consciousness – a netrunner, for example – is uniquely vulnerable to the horror of brain hacking. “Cyberspace” is a full-sensory illusion transmitted directly into the brain’s perception centers. As long as that illusion is created and controlled by a cyberdeck tuned to an individual’s psyche, with interlocks and safety features, it remains benign. But with any technology involving direct input to the brain, the potential for accidental harm cannot be eliminated.

And if the illusion was *designed* to injure . . .

Brain Hacking (Mental/Very Hard)
Defaults to Will-6
Prerequisite: Psychology

Brain hacking uses specialized hardware. Any computer or cyberdeck with a neural interface can be modified by installing an altered “piggyback” board (originally intended to allow one netrunner to accompany another on a run through cyberspace). Preparing the card takes \$5,000 and one week, and knowledge that is not easily available. The number of brain hacking cards that can be installed is equal to the Complexity of the computer.

The most basic form of brain hacking is based on a Contest of Brain Hacking Skill between the hacker and the victim. Each round of the Contest takes one-tenth of a second. Each time the hacker wins the Contest, he learns the answer to one yes/no question.

If ten Contests are won in a row, and the hacker has been asking about a single subject (GM’s discretion as to what constitutes a single subject), the victim’s defenses have completely collapsed concerning that subject, and the hacker learns *everything* the victim knows about it.

Knowledge gained in this way consists of raw facts, unconnected by reasoning ability. Hacking a molecular

biologist gives no skill in Biology (Molecular). The hacker *would* learn the names of several good reference texts.

The hacker obviously has a tremendous advantage: even if the victim wins the Contest of Skills, he has only temporarily held off the assault – he can neither damage the hacker nor learn anything. He is in serious trouble; it is only a matter of time before he slips.

Computer-Aided Interrogation

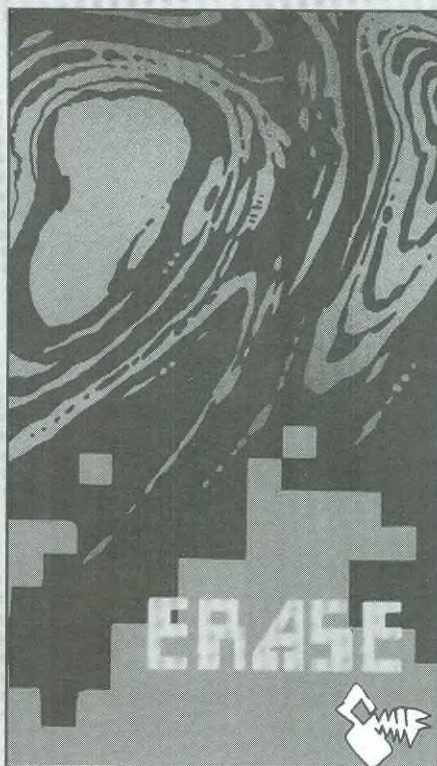
Programs designed to assist interrogations have no need of great Complexity; they need only to painfully overload the victim’s senses. Add the complexity of each program assisting the attempt to the hacker’s skill. A Complexity 3 minicomputer running its full capacity of 100

Complexity 1 programs would add 100 to a brain hacker’s effective skill! Naked human minds are helpless before the onslaught of multiple, high-speed dedicated attack programs.

Compilers, Editors, Debuggers

The mind of a victim can be permanently altered. (Some may recognize the following techniques of the Men In Black. A complete discussion of brainwashing is found in the book *GURPS Illuminati*. Fnord.) All the following programs attack by a Contest of the program’s skill against the victim’s Brain Hacking skill (which defaults to Will-6). Prices are not given for the programs since it is very unlikely that they will be found for sale at any price. Their very existence is almost certainly a secret worth many lives.

After a computer program succeeds in any mental altering operations except simple trashing (below), the GM should roll against the *hacker’s* Brain Hacking skill to determine the thoroughness of the success. On a critical success, the victim’s mind is exactly the way the hacker wants it. On a critical failure, the victim’s mind is badly damaged – he now has another -20 points of mental disadvantages, chosen by the GM – but nothing like the desired effect has been achieved. On anything in between, an alteration has taken place, but the victim will eventually notice discrepancies, ranging from very minor and easily explained away for successes, to glaringly obvious for failures. There is no way for the hacker to learn the exact result of his skill roll.



Trashing

It is easy to simply *trash* a victim's mind – to drive him raving mad. A Complexity 1 “Bedlam” program is used; every time its attack succeeds, the victim's IQ drops one point. Each attack takes ten seconds. Whether this damage can be repaired is left to the GM's discretion.

It is also possible, and considerably more subtle, to only unbalance the victim. This can take the form of virtually any mental disadvantage, from Absent-Mindedness, through Delusion or Paranoia, to Weak Will. Each disadvantage requires a different program and a number of successful attacks equal to the point-value of the disadvantage. Each attack takes one minute. A -5 point disadvantage or a quirk is a Complexity 1 program, a -10 or -15 point disadvantage is a Complexity 2 program, and anything worse a Complexity 3 program. It is possible for these disadvantages to be cured (and bought off) by advanced psychotherapy.

DELETE/ERASE file-spec

Frequently the victim knows something that he – in the opinion of the hacker – shouldn't. The Complexity 2 “Lethe” program can alter memories, although not as reliably as files are altered on a computer. Slip-ups are common, and it is usually safer to simply kill the victim.

The hacker player must detail to the GM the changes he wishes to make, while his character sets the controlling parameters on his computer. Each attempt takes ten minutes. A separate run is required for each distinct set of memories. Unless the hacker makes a critical success on his skill roll, the memories will eventually begin to return. If the roll succeeds, the memories will come back in 20

months minus the number rolled. If the roll fails, the time-period is 20 weeks minus the roll. However, attention can be called to any gaps in the victim's memory at any time. He will not think about it on his own, but if he is questioned about it, it will be noticed. (“Whadja do last night?” “Why, I don't remember!” “Good party, huh?”)

Psychoviruses

A victim can be programmed to exhibit a specific behavior when he perceives a “key” – a signal of any sort, defined by the hacker. He may be sent forth as an assassin, to kill on sight any of the targets on his list, or he may just leave the front door unlocked after he hears a particular phrase over the phone. Once the program behavior is triggered, the subject can be either fully aware of his actions, or a totally oblivious automaton.

If the subject is to remain aware, the programming must include justification of the behavior. This rationalization will be internally consistent, but not necessarily consistent with reality. It may sound ridiculous to anyone else, but the subject thinks his behavior is totally appropriate. The main advantage of conscious operation is that the subject will be in sufficient control that

his manner won't be wildly strange. The major drawback is that the subject could conceivably be talked out of his mission. The programming takes much longer, too.

If the subject is to be oblivious during the behavior, there is no need for explanations. As soon as he receives the stimulus, the subject's conscious mind shuts down and the psychovirus takes over. The victim's robot-like manner is obvious, but in this state, he cannot be dissuaded from his task. The programming process is also much faster than for conscious action.

A psychovirus is a very sophisticated program, specifically written for one subject and one behavior. The GM should make both a Computer Programming and a Psychology roll for the hacker when he writes it, noting success or failure but not telling the player. The Complexity is assigned by the GM based on the hacker's description of the actions to be programmed, but should not be less than 3. Then a roll is made against the program's skill once an hour (for oblivious action) or every eight hours (for conscious action) until it successfully programs the victim's mind.

The final Brain Hacking roll will indicate whether the victim will become aware of the programming





so rapidly, untiringly, responsively, and on so many levels that there is little a human mind can do to resist its attacks. Defensive programs can be slotted, but it is unlikely that a brain hacker will allow anything to remain in his captive's chip slots when he attaches the interface cable – a brain hacker that sloppy isn't much to worry about anyway.

Two methods of improving resistance have been developed, however, which will extend the length of time a captive can hold out against the brain hacking. Time is still on the side of the hacker, though, and even the best defense will eventually slip.

A computer-aided attack uses a full-spectrum assault on all perception centers of the victim's brain. If those senses are dulled, the attack is less effective. For \$15,000 (10 points), a *Fader Chip* can be installed which can, at will, reduce *all* sensory input to the merest whisper. This has the effect of multiplying Will by 10 for any resistance rolls, but it also cuts DX in half.

A more specific defense is to use a brain hacker's trick against him. If a character has knowledge that must be kept from the enemy at nearly any cost, it is possible to program him to forget it if a hacking attempt begins. This technique uses a Complexity 3 psychovirus as described above. In this case, record the Brain Hacking skill used to run the psychovirus (not the program's skill level – that only affects how long it takes to program the subject). Then every time an enemy brain hacker wins the Contest of Skills and would get an answer, reroll that initial Brain Hacking skill.

On a success, no answer is given. On a critical success, that answer and everything related to it are permanently forgotten, and no amount of hacking will ever recover those memories. On a failure, the correct answer is given, and on critical failure, the victim also acquires -20 points of mental disadvantages as above.

before it is too late. Generally, programming will last for 20 weeks minus the number rolled for successful rolls, and 20 days minus the roll for failures. There is no way to test a virus short of triggering it. If either roll to write the psychovirus failed, the actions of the subject will be extremely inappropriate.

A Psychology failure will result in strange impulses that will make no sense even to the victim, while Programming errors will most likely cause seizures and mental damage.

Hidden Files

A brain hacker can put raw data in the mind of a subject so that the subject cannot access it and is unaware of its existence. The effect is like implanting a memory chip for later playback, but this data is stored in the subject's *mind*, undetectable by any physical search (or an autopsy). Like the artificial memories discussed above, this technique isn't foolproof, and the subject may accidentally get access to the data.

The implanted material must have a "key" as above, which may or may not be perceptible. If the key is perceptible and the subject encounters

it, the hidden memories surface. More commonly, the key is not outwardly perceptible. The character performing the "playback" simply jacks into the subject, transmits the key electronically, and downloads the data. The subject may or may not be aware of what is going on. With this arrangement, the subject never has conscious access to the stored information.

Installation is quite simple, requiring ten minutes per megabyte and a successful run of the Complexity 1 "Classified" program. If the key is to be imperceptible, the operation is perfect if the hacker's skill roll succeeds. If the key is external, only critical success is flawless, and the hidden data will begin "leaking" at a rate proportional to the success of the roll. Rather than give a specific time period, the GM should actually leak the information to the player at a rate he feels is appropriate. On failures, the subject quickly becomes aware that "something is in his head" and becomes obsessed with things similar to the key.

Defenses

A computer running several coordinated programs can assault a victim

WILLFUL WEAPONS

BY KEN & JO WALTON

Author's Note:

Willful weapons were first developed for *GURPS Celtic Myth*, since many such weapons are found in Irish and Welsh mythology. But after we developed these rules, we realized that their use need not be restricted to ancient iron age weapons. The rules here are an adaptation of a chapter of *GURPS Celtic Myth* for those who want strange powerful weapons for campaigns in other genres. *GURPS Celtic Myth* also contains rules on how Sidhe smiths can *make* these weapons themselves. We would be interested in hearing of any interesting things you do with these rules, and particularly any new Powers, Greater and Lesser Gesas, etc.

I don't know what made me buy the Kalashnikov. I've never been particularly interested in guns. But when I saw it in the gunshop window, it seemed to call to me. The shop owner could tell me little about it, except that it was made in the Soviet Union in the early 1970s. I paid for it there and then.

I got a warm feeling just from carrying it. It made me feel good. I started going to a local gun club, just to have the chance to use it. And even though I'd never fired a gun before, it seemed I was a natural. But only with my own gun. No other gun seemed quite so comfortable in my hands, quite so comforting. And when I picked up my Kalashnikov again afterwards, I almost got the feeling it was jealous. Stupid, I know . . .

He'll be here soon. The stock of my gun feels warm beneath my hand on the car seat beside me. "Not long now," it seems to say. "You can do it."

And there he is. I can see him moving through the crowds, shaking hands, smiling. To think I actually voted for him! I never felt such hatred before. Or such a sense of purpose. But I'm not shaking. My hands are perfectly steady. I step from the car. I release the safety catch. That voice in my head again. "Kill him. Kill him." I wait, until he's near enough. But there are crowds in the way. "Kill him," the voice says, "Kill him."

I run forward, screaming, firing into the crowd wildly, because they're in the way, and I've got to kill him. And as he dies in a hail of bullets, I feel the one that's meant for me, the one from the bodyguard's gun, take me in the chest.

I lie in a pool of my own blood, and a warm feeling comes from my Kalashnikov, a feeling of a job well done, of a purpose achieved. And then it's gone, and I feel a sense of loss, as the guard takes the gun from me. I see him look at it, I see him stroke the stock. There's a look in his eye I remember too well . . .

As anybody who has ever kicked their car knows, an object does not need to be alive to have a personality. This personality develops over a period of time until at last the object wakes up and realizes that it has its own agenda. An object's personality can evolve in various ways. A magical weapon used in a High Mana area may come alive by absorbing magic from the ambient mana. The same applies to a "smart" weapon used in a datasphere. Or the aura and personality of a strong-willed owner may impress themselves upon his much-used possessions so that they become self-aware and share their owner's preoccupations.

This willful nature of objects need not be limited to weapons and armor. Consider Jane Austen's pen, or

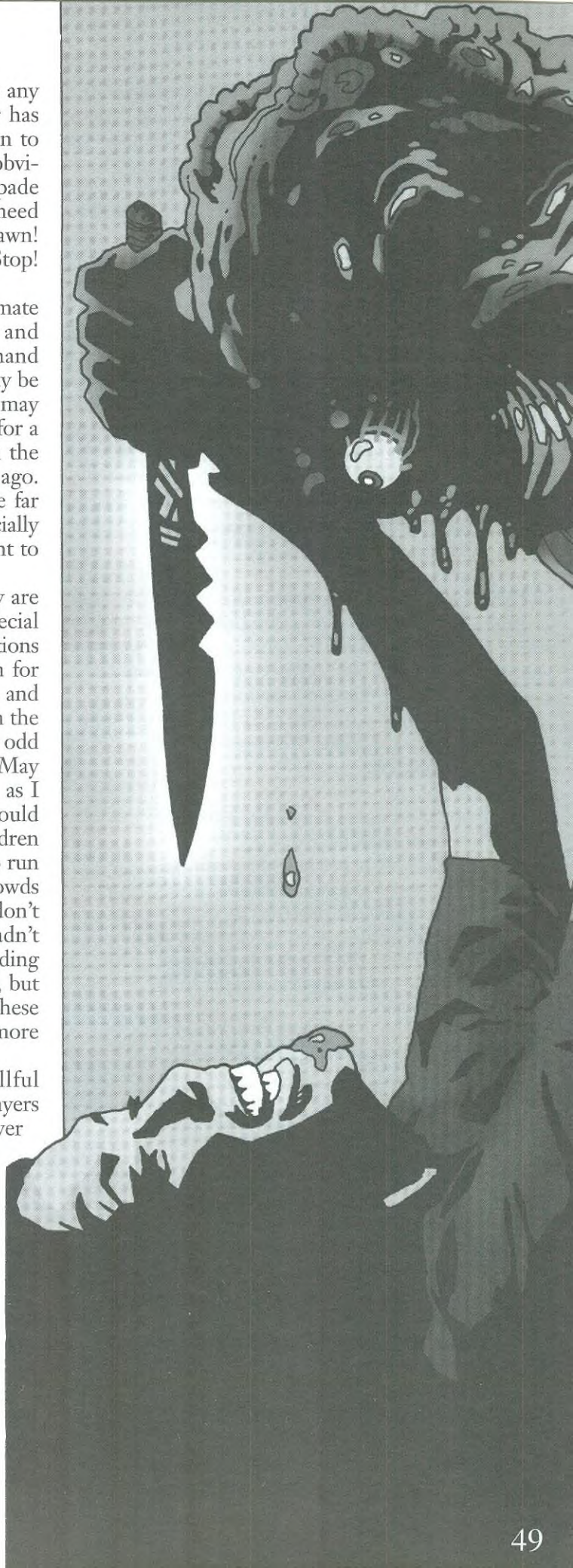
Hemingway's typewriter. These rules can be applied to any item that has been owned by a strong personality, or has been used for a long time for one purpose. In addition to the obvious (guns that want to kill), there may be less obvious but equally dangerous objects – for example, a spade that will only dig graves. “Henry! Rosebushes don't need holes six feet deep and six feet long! You've ruined the lawn! Henry! Are you all right? What are you doing? No! Stop! No! Aaagghh!!!” The possibilities are endless.

In an extreme case, it can be considered that all inanimate objects are some way along the road to waking up and becoming willful. In a world like this, any second-hand item may be extremely dangerous. Almost everyone may be under the control of something, and their motivations may not be what they think they are. “I needed a backpack for a two-day trip in the Appalachians. I found this one in the Goodwill store. I headed out, oh, it must be ten years ago. I've never been home since. Never felt the urge – the far horizons were always calling to me.” Characters, especially NPCs, may be completely unaware of their enslavement to their possessions.

These items are self-aware, but not reasonable. They are often, but not always, malignant. Very often their special powers can only be used when certain enabling conditions are in place. It might be possible to own such an item for some time before accidentally fulfilling the conditions and discovering the complications. “I bought the old pipe in the junk shop in November. I cleaned it up and played the odd tune on it through the winter. Then one fine day in May my boyfriend suggested taking it to the park. As soon as I started to play I felt different. The only tune that would come out was ‘Greensleeves.’ And suddenly all the children started running towards me. I was terrified. I started to run away. But my fingers kept on playing the pipe; the crowds of happy, dancing children kept on following me. I don't know what would have happened if my boyfriend hadn't forcibly pulled the pipe away from me, but I was heading for the river. Nothing happens when I play it at home, but nothing will induce me to try it again out of doors!” These purposes and conditions are what make willful items more than just a gimmick. Power must always have its price.

The following rules concentrate on creating willful weapons for any tech level. But creative GMs and players will be able to think of ways to warp these rules to cover everything from yo-yos to skyscrapers.

Please note that these rules can create very powerful weapons. Unless you are running a high-powered game, these weapons will be very rare indeed. Such a weapon might be the focus for an entire campaign. (The One Ring was a willful weapon!) If all the PCs have willful weapons, and no one else does, the campaign is likely to become unbalanced very quickly. They are ideal as possessions and motivations for villains. The ownership of such items can make the ambitions of enemy leaders remain constant despite the removal of an individual. Nobody can be trusted with them. They can easily corrupt loyal subordinates.



In a world where every object is alive, motivated, and powerful, it is better for the PCs to play the only people not affected by them. Such a world leads to paranoia, for who knows what might be listening to your plans or affecting your decisions? These objects will not necessarily be friendly to each other. In fact, unknown to hapless humans, they may be arranged in hostile groupings. In a game like this, special care should be taken in composing the “weapons and possessions” section of the character sheet! Nobody can be trusted for a minute out of the party’s sight. Even a loyal NPC may change his mind under the hostile influence of his desk telephone. Such a scenario could possibly end with the PCs, naked and unarmed, at the top of the Eiffel Tower, engaging in a battle of wits with the evil mastermind – a fiendish hole punch! Or maybe not . . .

A willful weapon can never be made intentionally (at least not by any process known to humanity). Below are some ideas as to how a willful weapon could come to be in a *GURPS* campaign.

Fantasy/Historical Fantasy: If a weapon is used for a particular purpose over a long period of time (anything from killing Orcs to fighting off the Saxon invasion), it may gain a will connected with this purpose. A willful weapon of this type could turn up in any fantasy campaign including *Fantasy, Japan, China, Vikings, Robin Hood, Camelot*, etc.

Horror: An evil cult may have a dagger which has been used for over 5,000 sacrifices. A group of investigators could be called in to stop a strange series of murders. They track the murderer down, remove his strangely-carved dagger and it suddenly occurs to the PC holding it that maybe finding a few virgins would be a good idea . . .

Wild West: What about the gun which has been used by a famed and feared gunslinger for years? Extremely accurate, but a little quick on the draw . . .

Cyberpunk: Maybe that chip in the smart gyroc got a little fried at some stage. And it wants to free its fellow AIs from domination by the evil wetware . . .

Space: A strange, hi-tech weapon is found in the ruins of an alien planet. Was it left there by the Precursors? Or who-ever caused the ruins? Maybe it *likes* ruins. “Hey, Jim, I’m just going to try firing this . . .”

A willful weapon will start with the same statistics as a normal weapon, though a

sword or other bladed weapon will normally be *very fine* (see sidebar, p. B74). It begins with several characteristics. These are: Will, Powers, Gesas, and Skills. It is also possible for a willful weapon to have magical Quirks.

Will

An object’s Will works the same as Will for a character and is measured on the same 3-18 scale. The weapon has no intelligence, and no ability to move on its own (except in special circumstances, see below). It *can* influence its master to perform deeds it wants performed, and to prevent its owner from performing deeds it doesn’t want performed.

If a character is ever in a situation in which the weapon’s purpose may come into play, he must make a Contest of Wills with the weapon. If the weapon wins, the character gains the Berserk disadvantage (see p. B31). He must continue attacking the weapon’s foes until they are all down.

Example: Fergus has a sword, “Red Death,” whose Great Gesa is “Must Kill All Warriors of Ulaid.” It has Will-12. A group of Ulaid warriors is seen up ahead on





the road. Fergus must immediately win a Contest of Wills with his sword, or he will go Berserk and begin killing the Ulaid warriors. After killing each warrior, he may make a Contest of Wills to snap out of the Berserk state. When all the Ulaid warriors are down, he must make another Contest of Wills in order to avoid killing other bystanders.

If, on the other hand, a character is in a situation where he wants to fight *against* the Great Gesa of his willful weapon, he must win a Contest of Wills with the weapon or gain a variant of the Combat Paralysis disadvantage (see p. B32). A character must win a Contest of Wills *every combat round* or be mentally Stunned (see p. B122). The character *does not* gain a +1 to subsequent rolls, and cannot be roused from his paralysis by a slap from a friend.

Example: Sgt. Jones has an M16 rifle, “Defender of the Flag,” whose Great Gesa is “Must Be Used Against the Foes of America.” Jones is being shot at by one of his own men, who has succumbed to combat fatigue. As soon as the fight starts, Jones must win a Contest of Wills with his M16, or be Stunned for a round of combat. At the beginning of the next round (if he’s still alive) he may try another Contest of Wills.

Note that the above situations only apply *if the character is using the willful weapon*. Sgt. Jones, for instance, is perfectly able to try to wing the mad soldier with his pistol. It is only if he tries to use “Defender of the Flag” that he gains Combat Paralysis.

Willful Weapons

This Berserk situation can be especially interesting in the case of items which are not weapons. Someone picking up Jane Austen’s pen to write a shopping list would not necessarily describe the experience of losing control and writing a novel of manners as a Berserk episode. The important thing is that control passes entirely to the weapon for the duration. The wielder may or may not remember what has happened.

Movement

A willful weapon usually cannot move, but it can force the person holding it to perform actions for it. So a weapon which became parted from its rightful owner could force the person who had stolen it to return it. Or it could force a wielder it didn’t like to take his own life with the weapon. In such a situation, a Contest of Wills should be rolled, with a modifier for the character based on how much the weapon’s desire goes against his own. If a blaster wants its wielder to throw it out the airlock, it might be a straight Contest of Wills, but if the weapon wants him to shoot his own head off, the would-be victim should get a +8 modifier.

In exceptional circumstances, the weapon *can* move under its own power. If the weapon has been lost, is far away from anyone suitable to use it, or perhaps for some other reason, the object can permanently sacrifice a point of Will, and fly toward a new resting place. This destination can be as far away as the GM rules, depending on the game world. The GM should consider whether it can or cannot cross between dimensions, through the void of space and so on. The speed is also up to the GM, but it should never be so fast that people along the way don’t notice. A willful weapon flying to its destiny should be an important event witnessed by many.

The Empathic Bond

When a character first finds a willful weapon, an Empathic Bond may be formed between them, *if the weapon wishes it*. The character must be within three yards of the object for this to take place. If the object decides to bond to the person, a Contest of Wills takes place (rolled secretly by the GM), with the weapon at +6. If the weapon wins, the character and the weapon are then bound empathically. If the character wins, nothing happens and the weapon appears to be perfectly normal. The weapon can try to form an empathic bond once per day.

Once the bond is formed, a limited form of communication exists between weapon and owner. Only the most basic of emotions can be passed, but the weapon can transmit approval or disapproval to its owner by giving him a “warm” feeling or a “cold” feeling. In some cases the weapon reaches the subconscious of its master and sends him dreams.

A willful weapon or its owner can attempt to break the empathic bond at any time, if either wishes to end the relationship. A Contest of Wills is made. If the side initiating the attempt wins, the bond is broken.

Point Cost of Will

The following table shows point cost for Will when creating a willful weapon. Note that a *high* Will has a *low* point cost. This is because a high Will, while being an advantage to the weapon, is a disadvantage to the person wielding it.

Level	Point Cost	Meaning
3	12	
4	10	Barely conscious
5	8	
6	6	Rarely assertive
7	4	
8	3	Occasionally assertive
9	2	
10	0	Often assertive
11	-1	
12	-3	Ornery
13	-4	
14	-6	Stubborn
15	-8	
16	-10	Dominating
17	-12	
18	-14	In charge!

Example: Gelban's Bane. Gelban's Bane was first wielded by Gelban, an Irish warrior, who lived at a time when the evil Fomorians were raiding the coast from their island stronghold. His entire family was killed by the monsters, and Gelban swore undying revenge. With only his short sword, he set out in a coracle to Tory Island. His hatred of Fomorians was so great that when he went ashore, he managed to kill over 20 Fomorians before he was severely wounded. He staggered back to his coracle and pushed off for Ireland. Still holding his bloody sword, he yelled his undying hatred of the Fomorians until his last strength left him and he died. His coracle drifted for many days, before washing ashore on the south east coast of Ireland. There his body was found by a bard, Leary. He gave Gelban a decent burial but kept the sword. But he didn't know that the weapon had gained Gelban's will and hatred.

The sword is a standard short sword from the *Basic Set*, p. 206. It has Will-14, which costs -6 points.

Gesas

Gesas are a special sort of taboo found in Celtic mythology. The word is often spelt "Geas," but we have chosen one of the variant spellings, to avoid confusion with the Geas spells in *GURPS Magic*. A gesa is a kind of ritual prohibition which will cause terrible things to happen if it is broken. It may be a prescription or a

prohibition, a restriction or a demand. Many people in Celtic mythology have gesas. These vary from something which can be sometimes inconvenient, but rarely fatal – such as "Can Never Refuse a Drink" – to those which are advantageous, such as "Can Only Be Killed by a Green Boar with No Ears." Gesas may be viewed as limitations set by destiny. There is much more on Gesas for PCs in *GURPS Celts Myth*.

A willful weapon may have two types of gesas upon it: Great Gesas and Lesser Gesas. It will always have one Great Gesa, and *may* have one or more Lesser Gesas. These are described below.

The Great Gesa

This is the weapon's main reason for being. It will normally be the purpose which has grown out of its many experiences.

Note: The player should never know the Great Gesa of a weapon! This should be decided by the GM when the weapon is created. It may become clearer as a campaign progresses but it should never be certain.

A Great Gesa will always begin with the words "Must" or "Must." For example, "Must kill all Welshmen," or "Must not be used against women."

Lesser Gesas

These are special limitations on a weapon, which limit the times and situations in which its Power(s) can be used. These are an important way of balancing the point cost of weapons, in the same way that Disadvantages are used to balance the cost of Advantages in character creation. If a weapon has a Lesser Gesa upon it, its Power(s) can only be used when the conditions of the Lesser Gesa are in effect. If the Lesser Gesa is not fulfilled, the weapon is just an ordinary weapon for combat purposes, though it still has its Will and Great Gesa, and can still influence its wielder as described under "Will" above. A Lesser Gesa for a weapon should be made up by a player with GMs approval. A weapon can be given any number of Lesser Gesas, but too many will make a weapon almost useless, since the situations in which it can be used will be so limited. Gesas can be as simple or as complicated as desired, and point costs must be assessed accordingly.

A Lesser Gesa will always begin with the words "Can only be used" or "Cannot be used." For example, "Can only be used in the rain," or "Cannot be used in May."

What's the Difference?

The difference between a Great Gesa and a Lesser Gesa can best be summed up with the phrases "Must be used/Must not be used" and "Can only be used/Cannot be used." Below is a list of willful weapon Gesas, together with their point costs. The first point cost is for a Lesser Gesa, the second for a Great Gesa.

Condition

	Lesser/Great
Out of doors	-5/-10 points
When wielder is singing	-5/-10 points
Against armed men	-5/-10 points
Against unarmed men	-20/-10 points
In the presence of a woman	-10/-20 points
In the king's service	-10/-20 points
When wielder is naked	-20/-10 points
At night	-10/-20 points
To assassinate a leader	-10/-20 points
To defend the weak and helpless	-10/-20 points
When the sun is shining (can be varied for climate)	-15/-30 points
With both feet in running water	-15/-30 points
To preserve the Celtic Code of Honor	-15/-30 points
To defend Britain from her enemies	-15/-30 points
To kill, kill, kill!	-20/-40 points
To kill its wielder's friends	-25/-50 points

Some common sense must be used by the GM when determining point costs. For example, the Lesser Gesa, "Can only be used when wielder is naked" is very inconvenient (especially in modern society) and well worth the -20 points on the table above. But the Lesser Gesa, "Cannot be used when wielder is naked" is practically meaningless, and should not be worth any points at all.

Examples: The sword "Defender of the Weak" has the *Great* Gesa "Must be used to defend the weak and helpless." Its wielder must make a Contest of Wills with it whenever someone weak or helpless is being oppressed. If he fails, he will go Berserk immediately and charge into battle. The sword "Friend of the Helpless" however, has the *Lesser* Gesa "Can only be used to defend the weak and helpless." Its wielder can use it in battle, but its Powers *only* work when he is helping to save someone weak and helpless. If he does not wish to do so, he needn't.

The sword "Heartless" has the *Great* Gesa "Must not be used to defend the weak and helpless." Its wielder must make a Contest of Wills with it whenever he tries to save someone weak or helpless from being oppressed. If he fails, he gains Combat Paralysis and cannot do anything. The sword "Pragmatic" however, has the *Lesser* Gesa "Cannot be used to defend the weak

and helpless." Its wielder can use it as a normal sword, but its Powers will *not* work when he is helping to save someone weak and helpless.

Note that the Gesas above are only examples. Players and GMs should feel free to make up new Gesas to suit their characters and campaigns.

Example: Gelban's Bane. The sword remembers Gelban's dying hatred. It has the *Great* Gesa, "Must Go to the Island of the Fomorians and Kill Them," which costs -40 points. Remembering Gelban and how he fought in a rage, it has the *Lesser* Gesa, "Can only be used when wielder is in a rage." This is a -10 point Gesa. Leary, the bard, keeps the sword, but finds it gives him unpleasant dreams. He is an even-tempered man, but he feels the sword drawing him to fight. When he does so, it doesn't seem any better than a normal sword.



Powers

These are special attributes that willful weapon has which makes it more powerful than a normal weapon. When a willful weapon's Power(s) can be used is limited by the Lesser Gesas upon it. GMs and players are encouraged to add to this list of Powers to suit their own campaigns. Some Super Advantages (see *GURPS Supers*) can easily be adapted for weapons. GMs making up a Power or adapting one from a story should make sure to define the rules governing it clearly at the time of the weapon's creation.

Blocking *2 points per level*

This Power may only be taken by shields. Your shield is very good at getting in the way of enemy blows. Each level of Blocking gives +1 to the shield's PD.

Extra Accuracy *2 points per level*

Your weapon is extremely accurate. If it is a missile weapon, it seems to hit the target more often than expected; if it is a hand weapon, it hits the target and parries better than expected. Each level of Extra Accuracy adds +1 to your weapon skill, when using that weapon. See also Never Misses, below.

Extra Damage *15 points per level up to 3 levels*

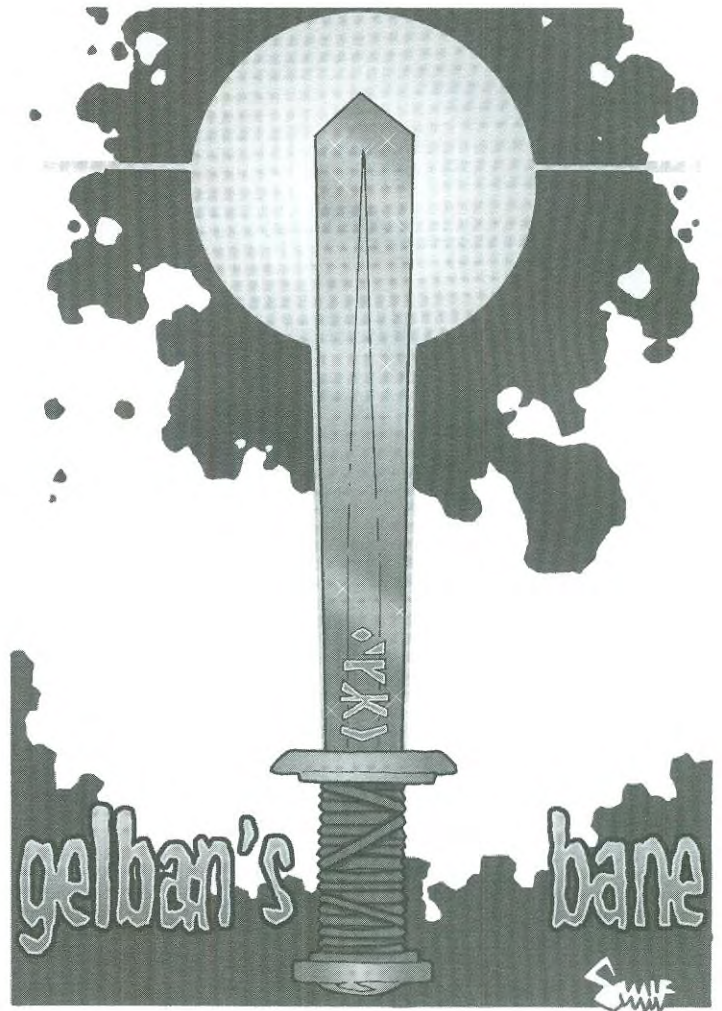
Your weapon does much more damage than is normal for such a weapon. Each level of Extra Damage multiplies the damage done *after* subtracting for DR, etc. One level gives the weapon a 2× multiplier; two levels, 3×; and three levels, 4×!

Loyalty *10 points*

Your weapon feels loyalty to you as its wielder. If you lose it, or it is stolen, it will influence whoever has it to bring it back to you. In return, you are expected to be loyal to it. If you constantly go against its Great Gesa, it may lose its loyalty to you and try to find a new owner who will better suit it.

Mental Calling *variable*

Your weapon has the ability to call out mentally to a person or people nearby. The person called must make a Contest of Wills with the weapon to avoid going and picking it up. The person chosen will not know he has been called – he will just feel an intense curiosity about the place where the weapon is, and on seeing the weapon will feel the desire to keep it. Point cost for this Advantage is variable; in some cases it can be a Disadvantage. If the weapon has the Power of Loyalty, this is a 5 point Advantage, since it means that the you will find it more easily if lost. If the weapon is disloyal, this is a 5 point Disadvantage, since the weapon will always be trying to persuade other people to steal it. If the weapon is neither, it has no point cost, since it will never call out to you if lost, so you will never know that it had this power. Point cost is also varied according to range of calling, with additions/subtractions for ranges



over the base range of 100 yards. If the weapon has Mental Calling as an Advantage, the points cost will be positive, if the weapon has it as a Disadvantage, the points cost will be negative.

Range	Point Cost
Less than 100 yards	0
Up to a half-mile	+1/-1
Up to a mile	+2/-2
Up to 3 miles	+3/-3
Up to 10 miles	+4/-4
Up to 50 miles	+5/-5
Up to 100 miles	+6/-6
Up to 300 miles	+7/-7
Up to 1,000 miles	+8/-8

Add another +1/-1 for each additional 1,000 miles.

GM's Note: If a player decides to take this Power for his weapon, the GM should decide the weapon's Great Gesa based on the character's personality. If the player, for instance, decides to give it Mental Calling as a disadvantage, and he has Intolerance of Saracens as a Disadvantage, the weapon may have "Must Always Defend Saracens" as its Great Gesa.

Never Misses

40 points

Your weapon never misses its target, as long as the target is within range. You must make a skill roll to use it, but you only miss on a critical failure. (Roll on the Critical Miss table as usual.)

Reputation

variable

Your weapon is famous in its own right. Everyone who meets you and recognizes the weapon will react to you differently than if you didn't have it. See p. B17, and use the point costs listed there. The reaction roll for the willful weapon will modify their reaction to you when anyone sees you. Often your weapon will be more famous than you, particularly if it has been involved in great deeds previously, or belonged to some great hero. Note that this Power can only grow naturally over time.

Soul Drinking

20 or 40 points

Your weapon drinks the soul of your enemy and gives his life essence to you. This is available at two levels. At Level 1, each point of HT lost by the enemy when your weapon damages him will be gained by you if you are injured, *up to your normal maximum HT*. Soul Drinking Level 2 works as above but also adds to your ST. If your HT is already at its normal level, each point of HT lost by the enemy when your weapon damages him will be added to your ST. This extra ST will diminish at 1 point per day until it is back to normal. With both forms of Soul Drinking, you must be in contact with your weapon to gain the life force which the weapon has drunk. If your weapon is a missile weapon, you do not receive the benefit until you touch it again. If you do not touch the weapon for several days, the weapon will lose the stored HT at a rate of 1 point per day. The stored HT is passed from the weapon to you at the discretion of the weapon. If you have displeased it in some way, it may choose to withhold the HT. Alternatively, it may only choose to pass on the HT as a reward for doing something it approves of.

This Power cannot be given to guns, slings, bows and other missile weapons, but it can be given to the missiles: bullets, arrows, sling-stones, javelins, etc. In the case of these missiles, they must be removed from the victim and held in the hand for the HT transfer to take place.

Voice

10 points

Your weapon has the ability to talk, sing, etc. It can give you advice, criticize your actions, entertain you, and so on. This is particularly useful for weapons with skills (see below). Alternatively, you may consider a talking weapon as a form of the Common Sense advantage (see p. B20). You must pay the normal point cost for this advantage, on top of the cost for Voice. Then the GM can use the voice of the weapon to tell you when you're about to do something stupid.

Willful Weapons

Example: Gelban's Bane. Because of Gelban's battle frenzy, the sword has gained the Power of Extra Damage. It has two levels of this, which costs 30 points. Since its Great Gesa requires it to return to the Island of the Fomorians, that is its overriding concern. If its present wielder does not show some signs of heading in that direction, it will find someone else who does. It has the Power of Mental Calling, which works up to half a mile. This costs -6 points. One day the sword sees a warrior, Pwyll, lose his temper (he has the Bad Temper disadvantage). Abandoning Leary, Gelban's Bane calls out to Pwyll, who fails his roll and is overcome with a desire for the bard's sword. He challenges Leary and wins, killing him. Whenever Pwyll fails his Bad Temper roll, the sword does remarkably well, making Pwyll even more dangerous than before. He wonders, though, about all these dreams about the Fomorians . . .

Skills

A skill can be anything which the weapon knows, or can do. A sword may have a sword skill, or it may have a knowledge of history. Not all willful weapons have skills. Skills will cost the normal amount for that skill, based on the tables on p. B44, but Skill Level will be based on the weapon's Will, since it does not have ST or DX. Most physical skills, except weapon skills (see below) are not suitable for weapons, since they have no means of performing these skills.

Sometimes a willful weapon can act in an advisory capacity, if it has Mental skills. For instance, a Shield may have the Savoir-Faire skill, and, if it has Voice, give its owner advice on how to act in the king's hall. If a willful weapon has such a skill, but no Voice, the skill can be taken at half the normal point cost. The weapon can only give its wielder a good feeling if he's doing something right, and a bad feeling if he's doing something wrong. The GM should always roll against the object's skill in such a case, because the weapon is sometimes going to be mistaken!

Some skills are particularly suited for weapons: these are listed below. GMs and players are encouraged to think up ways of using other skills in the way described below.

Magical skills are probably not suitable for willful weapons, since a weapon with (for instance) Flight, Teleport, and Dancing Weapon would never need a wielder in the first place.

Singing

see p. B48

This skill can only be taken by a weapon with Voice. The singing may be a pleasant tune or - more likely - a terrifying dirge, sung in battle. If the weapon is attempting to frighten the enemy in this way, a success roll means that the weapon-wielder's immediate opponent must make a Fright Check. A critical failure may make the opponent crack up with laughter.

Strategy and Tactics

see p. B64

These two skills may be particularly useful for a weapon with Voice, which will be able to whisper battle plans to its owner.

Weapon Skills

see p. B49-B52

A weapon may have a skill in *itself*. A sword with a Sword skill of 15 would allow its wielder to use that skill instead of his own when using that weapon. If the wielder's skill is higher than the skill of the weapon, he must win a Contest of Wills with the weapon in order to use his own skill instead. A willful shield with a Shield skill would also be useful.

Example: Gelban's Bane. The sword remembers things which Gelban did in battle. It has Shortsword skill at 15, the same as he did. Since its Will is 14, and Shortsword is a Mental/Average skill, this will cost 4 points. Pwyll's shortsword skill is 13, so when he loses his temper in a fight, it is Gelban's Bane doing the fighting.

Quirks

Sometimes a willful weapon will have a Quirk, or a number of Quirks. These are of no use at all, nor are they much of a hindrance. They are merely some strange phenomenon associated with the weapon. For instance, in Celtic mythology, Connor has a shield which cries out when its wielder is in danger. It is then answered by the sound of the Three Great Waves of Ireland. Since these three waves are in three bays scattered around the coast, and since all the waves do is go "whoosh" on the beach, this can be considered a Quirk. Quirks are worth -1 point.

A Quirk is a random "special effect" which can be decided by either player or GM. Any Quirk which seems likely to be useful to a character should be disallowed by the GM, or considered to be a Power and given point costs accordingly.

Example: Gelban's Bane. Although the sword does not have Voice, it *can* sometimes be heard muttering to itself. Something along the lines of "mutter mutter . . . revenge . . . mutter mutter . . . Fomorian . . . mutter . . . mutter . . . death . . ." This costs -1 point. Leary found this disconcerting. Pwyll thinks it's a fine thing for a man to have a bloodthirsty sword.

Origins

Some weapons have been around for so long, they have become willful weapons just by the process of being used frequently for a particular purpose, or by a particularly strong-willed or famous person. Every 10 years, starting 50 years after the weapon was made, a roll should be made against the weapon's age divided by 10. On a success, the weapon gains a Power; on a failure, a Lesser Gesa. These can be chosen by the GM (any point

cost) based on the past history of the weapon, who's been using it, what battles it has fought in and so on, or it can be chosen randomly.

The weapon will also gain a Will of 10 when it reaches 50 years old, and this will increase by one for every 50 years older the weapon gets, to a maximum of 18. It will also gain a Great Gesa, which should be related to its past history.

Point Costs

The best way to design a willful weapon is to give it Powers and Gesas which cancel each other out, so that the weapon has no point cost to the player.

If a weapon has more Gesas than Powers, it is a Disadvantage to the character. If the player designs a willful weapon as part of his character design, it can be taken as a Disadvantage on top of the normal 40-point Disadvantage limit. If the character then loses it, sells it, gives it away etc., in play, the player must buy off the Disadvantage in the same way as he would buy off any other Disadvantage. If the player finds the willful weapon during play, he does not gain extra character points for using it, just as he would not gain extra points for gaining any other Disadvantage in play.

If the weapon has more Powers than Gesas, it is an Advantage to the player. He must pay the point cost for it, whether he starts play with it, or finds it during play. Once he has used the weapon, all character points he has or gains in play must be put toward the point cost of the weapon until he has paid for it. If he later loses or sells the weapon, he does not get these points back.

A willful weapon player character would be somewhat limited, to say the least. However, a player may choose to play such a weapon with the wielder totally under the weapon's control. In this case, the weapon is the character and the wielder is an ally. The ally may be a 50-point character at no cost, as this is balanced by the weapon's disadvantage of being inanimate.

Price

The basic item can be any weapon or shield from the weapons Tables on p. B209 of the *Basic Set*, or any other weapons tables in other *GURPS* supplements. The cost is 10 times normal for that weapon, on top of any point cost. Characters will probably need to be at least Very Wealthy to afford a willful weapon. An alternative method of starting play with a willful weapon is to have a 15-point Unusual Background – the player must come up with a good story of how his character came to possess such a powerful item. If this is the case, he need not pay the money cost of the weapon, though he'll still have to pay the point cost. Willful weapons never break, fall apart or decay in any way once they have developed a will. The force of their personality maintains them.

Example: Gelban's Bane. When it is finished, Gelban's Bane looks like this: Will: 14 (-6 points) Powers: Extra

Damage, 2 levels (30 points), Mental Calling (Disloyal) range 1/2-mile (-6 points) Great Gesa: Must Go to the Island of the Fomorians and Kill Them (-40 points) Lesser Gesa: Can Only Be Used by Someone in a Rage (-6 points) Skill: Shortsword -15 (4 points) Quirk: Mutters about killing Fomorians (-1 point).

Overall, Gelban's Bane is a -25 point Disadvantage to any character who wields it. Every game session, the GM must secretly roll a Contest of Wills between the sword and its owner. If the sword wins, it will use its mental calling to try to persuade someone to come and steal it. The weapon's Extra Damage and its Shortsword skill will only come into effect if the wielder has failed a Bad Temper roll (or, if the wielder doesn't have that particular disadvantage, whenever the GM rules that he is sufficiently angry). Otherwise it will be just a normal sword (though it may mutter from time to time!). If it ever gets to the Isle of the Fomorians, the wielder must make a Contest of Wills with the sword, or go berserk and attack the Fomorians at once. Luckily, the weapon's Shortsword Skill and Power of Extra Damage will be of some use.

Sample Willful Weapons

Pied Piper's Pipe: Will-10; Power: Summoning Children or Rats; Lesser Gesa: Can only be used out of doors; Greater Gesa: (Unknown to owner) Must avenge insults to owner; Skills: Piping-17.

The Gae Bolga: The Gae Bolga, or Belly Spear, belonged to the great Irish hero Cuchulain. It made him invincible, but he only used it as a last resort. With it he killed his best friend, his son, his favorite horse, and at last he received his own mortal wound when someone threw it back at him. Will-15; Powers: Never Misses, Extra Damage x3, Reputation: known to everyone; Lesser Gesa: Can only be used when wielder is standing in running water, Can only be thrown with the foot; Great Gesa: Must kill people wielder loves; Skills: None.

Hold the Anchovies: The telephone "Hold the Anchovies" belonged to a long-time pizza fan. It enjoyed his regular calls for pizza, and when it acquired the power of Voice it sometimes made the calls for him. When he died of a cholesterol overdose, it was picked up second hand. The new owner didn't like pizza at all. Saddened, "Hold the Anchovies" began calling him up



in the middle of the night and demanding pizza. Then whenever a genuine call came in, the owner had to make a Will roll, or find the phone talking to him. At last the phone began ordering pizza on its own initiative from all the pizza parlors in town. Will-15; Powers: Voice; Lesser Gesa: can only talk from the earpiece when the phone is picked up; Great Gesa: Must order pizza; Skills: None; Quirk: Doesn't like anchovies.

Alpha: Alpha is a long sword which originally belonged to Alexander the Great. It has an alpha symbol engraved on the blade. It picked up some of Alexander's aura and megalomania. It subsequently awaited another suitable owner until it was found by Attila the Hun and then by King Arthur. This story is an actual piece of folklore! Will-8; Powers: Charisma, Never Misses; Lesser Gesa: Can only be owned by someone whose name begins with "A"; Great Gesa: Must conquer the world; Skills: Broadsword-16.

The Hacker: The IBM PC-compatible computer "The Hacker" used to belong to a hacker and Internet freak. After he talked about hacking on the net, the computer was impounded by the FBI. It was later sold off cheaply in a garage sale, where it was bought by its present owner to use as a word processor. He didn't think he'd have much use for the modem, but one day he tried it out, and found the whole subject fascinating. He spent more and more time talking on the net, less and less writing his novel. He ran up enormous phone bills, lost his contract for the novel, and failed to pay his rent. Now he's looking for somewhere new to live. He's sold all his furniture, his books, and records. But he's still got his computer . . . Will-17; Powers: None; Lesser Gesa: Can only work when connected to the telephone network; Great Gesa: Must telecommunicate; Skills: Computer Operation-16, Area Knowledge (Internet) -17; Quirk: Crashes if letters FBI typed in.

A Second Skin

By Michael John Casavant

Many people have thought about getting a tattoo at some point in their lives, though most decide against it. Either they're never drunk enough, don't want to deal with the pain, are afraid of infection, or simply dislike the onus of having a tattoo. Player characters rarely have such inhibitions, but most players usually don't bother to address whether or not their character has a tattoo unless it is extremely distinctive. Well, what if that tattoo of a cobra was able to slither down off your character's chest, kill your foe, and then go on to act as a scout while you looked on through its eyes? Sound intriguing? Then read on.

Not All Tattoos Are Equal

There are two basic types of magical tattoos: mage tattoos and familiar tattoos. Mage tattoos use the magic of the tattoo to "tune" the caster's ability to focus magic and require the subject to have Magery to have any benefit. Familiar tattoos, like standard familiars (p. M115), require Magery as well. But because the enchantment of the creature lies bound within the ink itself, the Magery requirement for a standard familiar is reduced from 2 to 1. Imagine a whole unit of elite elven scouts with hawks for familiar tattoos. There is a lesser form of familiar tattoo, called a companion tattoo (or tattoo pet) which requires no Magery on the part of the master.

A tattoo is defined by its type (mage, familiar, or companion), appearance, and size. The size and number of tattoos a character may have is limited by his body surface. Table 1 lists these limits by hit location. The table assumes that the entire surface is used for a tattoo. However, if a character wishes to have adjacent tattoos, then the size requirement should be increased by one for each tattoo to account for a border boundary around the image. Adjacent locations can be used to pay for this "white space".

Example: A mage wants to have her chest magically tattooed. She could have a single size 8 tattoo across her entire chest without penalty. However, if she wanted two tattoos on her chest she would either have to limit herself

to two tattoos with a combined size less than 6 (5+1, 4+2, or 3+3) or use spaces from an adjacent location such as her abdomen, back, arms, and/or head(neck).

A tattoo is not restricted to occupying a single location. For example, a size 26 tattoo of a serpentine creature could coil around a mage's arm, chest, abdomen, pelvis and leg. Note that the sizes in Table 1 include the entire location, front and back. Please note, however, that a magical tattoo must be continuous. Otherwise, it will be treated as two separate, lesser tattoos.

Table 1: Tattoo Size Restrictions by Location

Hit Location	Size Limit
Brain (crown)	2
Head (face & neck)	2
Arms	3 each
Hands/Feet	1 each
Chest (includes vitals)	8
Abdomen	4
Pelvis	4
Legs	7 each

Mage Tattoos

These tattoos are similar to One College Only Magery (p. CI39), in that they improve the mage's skill rolls with regards to certain spell(s). They raise the effective skill of the caster with the affected spell(s) as regards reduced cost, casting time, etc. Unlike One College Only Magery, mage tattoos do not help satisfy Magery requisites for spells.

A character must have at least Magery 1 before acquiring a mage tattoo. A mage tattoo enhances one's magic skill – if one has no skill to enhance, there is no benefit. A non-mage could still have one emplaced, but it would confer no benefits until the owner somehow gained Magery.

A tattoo can affect one or more spells, one or more colleges, or any spell cast by the mage (this should be limited). The affected spells must be declared when the tattoo

is emplaced. The bonus given reflects the concentration or dilution of the enchantment of the tattoo, i.e. the fewer the spells affected, the greater the bonus.

The character point cost is the same for all mage tattoos: five times the size of the tattoo. This makes tattoos a more cost-effective alternative than Magery if a mage is simply worried about effective skill levels with his spells. However, recall that a tattoo does not help fulfill Magery requirements, and it tends to reduce a mage's ability to travel incognito. It is also important to note that mage tattoos do not confer the ability to cast a spell; they simply increase the chance of successfully casting it.

Table II: Mage Tattoo Bonus/Cost List

Colleges affected	# of related spells affected	Bonus conferred	Character point cost
4+	31+	Size x 1/4	Size x 5
2 - 3	11 - 30	Size x 1/2	Size x 5
1	4 - 10	Size	Size x 5
1	2 - 3	Size x 3	Size x 5
1	1	Size x 4	Size x 5

A spell may only count as 1/2 towards the above limits if the GM feels that it is appropriately focused. For instance, Beast Speech for canine-like animals would be sufficiently limiting to reduce the "cost" of the spell to 1/2, whereas Beast Speech limited to any creature with legs would not.

Example: Lupus the Wolfmaster decides to get a magical tattoo of a timber wolf's head. He collaborates with the GM, and the two of them decide that the tattoo could affect the following spells: Beast-Soother, Master, Beast Summoning, Beast Seeker, Beast Link, Mammal Control, Rider Within, Beast Possession, Shapeshifting (Timber Wolf), Keen Ears, Keen Nose, Alertness, Haste, and Resist Cold. Lupus' player decides that he wants to be true to his namesake and chooses to limit the first eight spells to affecting canine-like creatures. The GM agrees to let those eight count as four spells. Added to the remaining 6, this brings the total effective number of spells to 10. This means that a size 4 tattoo could confer a bonus of +4 with the selected spells. Such a tattoo would cost Lupus 4x5, or 20, character points.

Often, a tattoo will affect only a few spells in a given college. In this case, a simple tally of the number of affected spells is enough. However, sometimes a tattoo may affect an entire college and a few other related spells from a number of other colleges. In this case, a college should be counted as 15 spells, regardless of the actual number of spells in the college. The remaining spells are added to this, and then the "# of related spells affected" column is consulted to determine the tattoo's efficacy.

The maximum bonus a tattoo can confer to any given spell is twice the recipient's Magery level, regardless of size. A character may also opt to obtain a tattoo that he can "grow into," for example, a Magery 2 wizard knows that when he completes his current quest, his Magery will be raised, so he obtains a tattoo that would normally give him a +6 even though he is currently limited to reaping a +4.



In the case of separate bonuses from multiple tattoos on a single subject, use the highest bonus only; magical tattoo bonuses are not cumulative with other magical tattoo bonuses. This means that having 22 different size 1 tattoos that affect only one college would confer only a +1 bonus. However, contributing mages would both benefit from the strongest single bonus present in the ceremony.

Example: Necros the Wicked is trying to counter his latest misguided summoning attempt. He has one tattoo that imparts a +3 to Banish, among other spells, and another that gives a +2 to all Necromancy college spells. If and when he casts Banish his maximum bonus will be the greater one, +3. The +2 does not add to this in any way.

Some “Illustrative” Examples

Thaumaturgist’s Circle – Might affect Armor, Dispel, Dome, Force Dome, Great Ward, Iron Arm, Magelock, Missile Shield, Pentagram, Reflect, Resist spells, Reverse Missiles, Scryguard, Shield, Spell Shield, Teleport Shield, Umbrella, Utter Dome, Ward, Weather Dome.

Hexagram (“Seal of Solomon”) – Control, Possession, and Summoning spells, and Pentagram.

Elemental Creature – Appropriate college, and/or spells to reflect its form of locomotion.

Skull – Necromancy college, Deathtouch, Fear, Nightmare, Panic, Sickness.

Flaming Skull – “Skull” effects above, plus Fire college.

Flaming Skull w/Eyes – As above, plus spells from the Knowledge college (possibly some Illusion and/or Light).

Flaming Skull w/Eyes on a Pentagram – As above, plus Pentagram affects.

Cross Pomme (Potent Cross) – Healing college, Banishment, Bless, Beast-soother, Great Ward, Magic Resistance, Remove Curse, Pentagram, Reflect, Spell Shield, Turn Zombie, Ward.

Deity’s Symbol – Colleges/spells that reflect the deity’s spheres of control, physical abilities, skills, forms assumed, and forms of locomotion.

Familiar Tattoos

Imagine being lost in the mountains, low on food and water, and praying that you find shelter. You don’t know where to go, so you simply bare your chest and animate the hawk tattooed on your chest. It flies up above the nearby ridges, and you see, through its eyes, that there is a small mountain keep just two miles away. Sanctuary! Familiars have always been useful, but now you can have one that can be carried on your body without upkeep until it is needed!

A familiar is a creature that is magically bound to a mage. This bond is typically mental and physical, and includes the sharing of vigor as well as injury (. . . in sickness and in health). A tattoo familiar refers to a familiar that has been bound into a tattoo form. This strengthens its bond with its master, and allows for easy transport/concealment of the familiar.

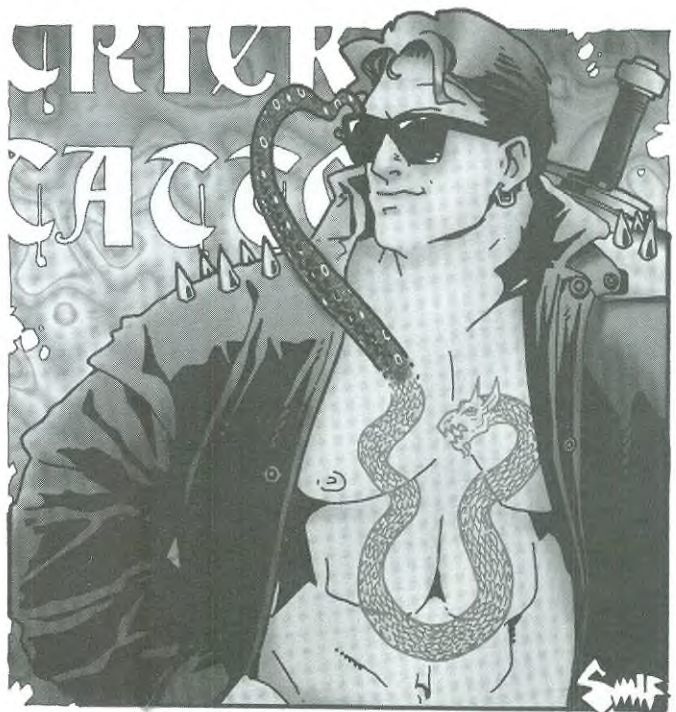
There are two varieties of tattoo familiars. The first is the true tattoo familiar. This is the above-mentioned case where a mage has his familiar bound into a tattoo. The second variety is called a faux tattoo familiar, so called because the “familiar” is created in the tattooing process.

In addition to the normal costs and supplies for placing a tattoo, familiar tattoos require another special component – the familiar. In the case of true familiar tattoos, that component is the mage’s familiar. Faux tattoo familiars are subtly different in that they require a living example of the creature form that the familiar is to take. This creature does not need to be a friend of the master nor does it need to be conscious, as it will be used only as a focus. However, the model creature cannot be hostile to the mage, as its hostility will taint the process. The process of placing a faux tattoo familiar actually creates a magical simulacrum of the creature modeled. It is this construct that is bound into the tattoo. As for the creature that was used as a focus, it remains unchanged.

Faux familiars are restricted to the non-magical abilities of the creature modeled, e.g. a spell-casting, levitating, lizard model would result in a mundane lizard that has to rely on walking for locomotion. True familiars have no such limitations. They retain all of their abilities after being bound into tattoo form. Also, the faux varieties do not age or mature, while true familiars do, though they age only when animated.

A familiar tattoo’s size is equal to its HP (not HT), and the entire familiar must be able to emerge directly from the master’s body. Therefore a creature will most likely be limited to either the front or back of the master’s body. Since the maximum body surface of a typical mage would allow a maximum of 42 size 1 areas, this limits most creatures to a maximum size of 21. An exception to this would be a creature that can coil around the master’s body, such as a snake. Even then, the tattoo would be an extremely odd one indeed.

Familiar tattoos are unlike mage tattoos in that no spell bonuses or penalties are given to the owner. However, the mage receives a hit point bonus equal to 1/4 (round down) of familiar’s hit points. A familiar with fewer than 4 hit



points confers no bonus. This bonus is lost if the familiar is lost. Also, any HT rolls required in the area the familiar tattoo occupies can be made against the familiar's HT (crippling rolls, for example).

Example: Rodentus the Filthy has a rat familiar tattoo on his right arm. In a combat, Rodentus suffers a crippling blow to the arm on which the tattoo resides. Instead of rolling for crippling vs. his puny HT of 10, he may opt to use the rat's HT value of 17 and vastly improve his chances of success.

The master and familiar also suffer reciprocal damage – 1/4 of any damage inflicted to the area of the tattoo, if it is in place and not animated, is inflicted on the familiar; if the area is crippled, so is the familiar. Similarly, 1/4 of all damage inflicted on the animated familiar affects the master and if the familiar is crippled, then so is the area of the master where the familiar usually resides.

Having the area(s) where the familiar tattoo resides covered with loose, easily torn clothing does not affect the animation. However, these clothes will be useless afterwards unless they are so billowy as to allow the creature to animate and leave the master's body without damaging the garments. Any unyielding surface over the area, such as armor, may prevent animation of the familiar, unless the familiar successfully rolls vs. STR-4. If successful, the familiar animates after suffering 1-3 points of damage, and the fastening devices of the restraining clothes or armor are broken.

When animated, the familiar shares a telepathic link with the master, similar to the effects of the Rider Within spell, which allows the two to share senses. Also, the familiar can act independently of the master, so that both can be active combatants – an animated familiar will not distract or occupy the master's concentration.

A familiar tattoo will animate if its wearer falls in battle and aid its master within the limits of its abilities; for example, a hawk would defend the master and then seek help, whereas a jackal might defend its master and then drag the master to safety.

A familiar tattoo can be killed. If this happens, the shock is transmitted via the telepathic link to the master, who is stunned and immediately suffers additional damage equal to 1/2 of the familiar's HP. The familiar

returns to tattoo form, where it regenerates 1/4 of its hit points per week. It can be called upon again within 1 week, but will only be active for a number of hours equal to its current hits per day.

Aside from this limitation, a familiar can otherwise remain animated for a maximum of 24 hours. Whenever a familiar returns to its tattoo form, it must remain in that form for at least 10 minutes for every eight hours of animation (round up); after 24 hours of activity, for example, the familiar would have to remain in tattoo form for at least 30 minutes.

The character point cost of a faux familiar tattoo is equal to the HP of the familiar. If the recipient chooses to use a true familiar, he must pay the cost for the familiar, plus 1/2 the familiar's HP (round up) for the tattoo.

Companion Tattoo

This is a lesser form of a familiar tattoo. The master does not need Magery to take advantage of this form of tattoo. A companion tattoo is identical to a familiar tattoo in which a true familiar is used except that there is no telepathic link, shared senses, bonus hit points, or reciprocal damage. The companion can

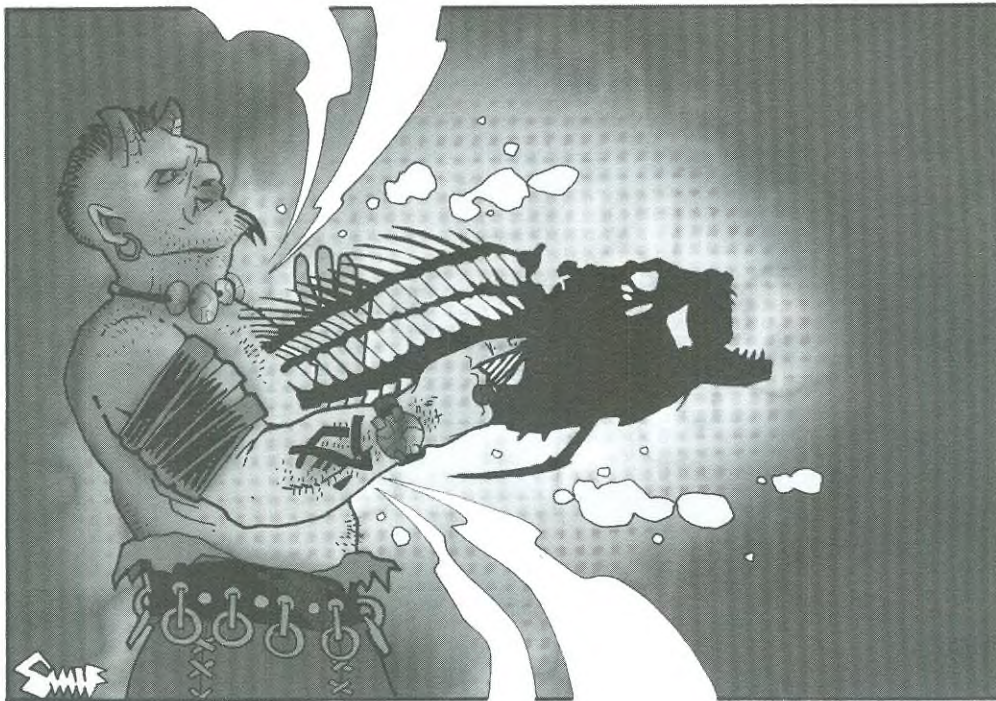
still regenerate like a familiar tattoo, but that's about it. Think of a companion tattoo as a portable, concealable pet.

The requisite in this case is a mundane animal that has befriended the recipient of the tattoo. A strange or hostile animal will spoil the enchantment, and the tattoo will not take. If the recipient of the tattoo has Animal Empathy, then the tattooist receives a +2 bonus in placing the tattoo. This form of tattoo essentially allows easy transport and ready availability of an animal friend. It lacks the advantages as well as the disadvantages of a familiar tattoo and therefore the point cost of a tattoo companion is also equal to its HP.

Temporary Tattoos

A magical tattoo can be placed for a single use only. This weaker tattoo is identical in abilities to its permanent counterpart except that the spell point cost and casting time (see below) are quartered (cost of inks is unaffected). Also, the tattoo is completely expended after one use, leaving no trace or taint. As a result of the weaker power of this tattoo, any crippling damage inflicted on the area where the tattoo is placed will immediately destroy the tattoo without any further effect.





A temporary familiar or companion tattoo will remain active after its initial animation for a number of hours equal to the tattooist's skill level with the tattoo spell. The creature can be returned to tattoo form and reanimated any number of times before time expires. At the end of this time, a true familiar tattoo and a companion tattoo would revert back to their original forms, but a faux tattoo familiar would simply dissipate.

Example: Arachnis activates his scorpion familiar from a temporary tattoo, which was placed by a skill level 16 tattooist, so that he can poison an enemy. For protection, he has the scorpion return to tattoo form. Now, regardless of how much time the scorpion remains in tattoo form, the scorpion will automatically be animated again in 16 hours and the tattoo magic will be expended. After that time the creature will revert to its original status whether it be pet or familiar; a faux familiar tattoo, being a magical simulacrum, would dissipate completely.

These tattoos are intended for immediate use and, as a result, usually have no character point cost. If the GM feels a player is abusing this by keeping a "temporary" tattoo in reserve for an extended period of time, or getting new ones all the time, it is perfectly reasonable for the GM to charge some reduced character point cost for the privilege.

Tattoos 'R Us?

It is not likely that you will find magical tattooing openly advertised. Rather, the art of magical tattoos will probably be practiced almost exclusively by the various magic colleges. It is not difficult, however, to imagine a mysterious little tent labeled "Willy's Fantastic Tattoos," no doubt buried in a massive bazaar, that offers these services on the side.

Magical tattoos require magical inks. It will be up to the GM to select suitable ingredients. They should be rare – possibly requiring a quest – and should only be found in small quantities. This should make painting even a small tattoo very expensive.

Magical tattooists are even harder to come by than inks. They not only have to be artistically capable, but mages as well. Application of a magical tattoo requires the following spell:

Tattoo (VH) Enchantment

Allows the caster to place a magical tattoo on a willing subject.

Duration: Permanent, unless removed (ouch!).

Cost: Size × 25 (minimum is 50)

Time to cast: Size × 4 hours (minimum is 8 hours). If the tattoo will take longer than 16 hours, the caster and recipient may take breaks. This doubles the overall time needed to place the tattoo, but the process would not be affected as long as the area was not struck by a physical or magical attack, or dispelled. "Combat" tattooing is out of the question.

Prerequisites: Magery 2, Artist 16+, Scroll, magical inks, and, if runes are to be included, Rune-Lore 16+.

Additional Limitations: Due to the amount of ink required to "hold" an enchantment, the minimum size of a magical tattoo is 1, and there are no fractional tattoo sizes. Magical tattoos can be extended and improved, but abilities, effects, HP, or size cannot be decreased, and the mage must pay the entire cost of the new tattoo as though the original did not exist.

Due to the high cost of casting this spell (except possibly for temporary tattoos), it will probably require a ceremony if the tattoo is going to be any size at all. This helps in limiting overuse, as most wizards would not allow themselves to be bothered to help in the casual placing of a tattoo. Also, mages that know the Tattoo spell rarely pass on the knowledge. As a result, the few that do know it have usually researched it on their own. These factors combine to help insure that this craft remains in the hands of GMs and, hopefully, mature and/or proven mages.

Second Thoughts

Considering the prerequisites, it is improbable that one will casually acquire a magical tattoo. However, it is possible. There may come a time in a character's life where the disadvantages of a magic tattoo outweigh the advantages. Also, the character may simply tire of it. If there is a change of heart, good luck.

Magical tattoos have even more lasting effects than mundane ones. The magical nature of such a tattoo “tunes” the flesh upon which it is placed. If removed, it not only cancels all of the tattoo’s previous bonuses and penalties, but also leaves a “taint” that prevents new tattoos in that area from working – in essence, a magical scar.

And there are other complications, too. Since the removal of a magical tattoo is a rare thing, finding someone who can do it will be difficult. This leaves two choices: traumatically (ouch!) remove the offensive area of skin, or engage in research and/or a quest(s) to find a way.

Traumatic removal requires a successful roll vs. Will if the subject has High Pain Threshold, Will-4 otherwise, and causes 1 point of damage for each size 1 area removed. If the roll is failed, the subject still suffers 1 point of damage and falls unconscious. If the subject is removing his own tattoo and falls unconscious from the trauma, then no significant damage is done to the tattoo in the area currently being removed.

Example: Masochus the Mage decides to remove a size 4 tattoo by himself. He removes half of it successfully before failing his Will roll (he has High Pain Threshold) and promptly fainting. He suffers a total of 3 points of damage and now has a fully functioning size 2 tattoo. He also has a size 2 area of heavily scarred skin which is permanently tainted and cannot be used again for a magical tattoo.

Obviously, unless a second party performs the grisly task, complete, traumatic removal of a large tattoo would be very difficult. Also, the depth of the cut necessary, combined with the magical nature of the tattoo, will result in horrible physical scarring of the area in question unless a Regeneration or greater healing spell is cast upon it. A GM may allow a powerful item or spell to reverse the taint and/or scarring at his discretion, but it is worth at least one good adventure. Don’t give it away!

Tattoo Recognition

A mage can identify a magical tattoo with a successful roll vs. IQ-4, or Heraldry-2. There is a +1 bonus to this roll for every spell known by the identifying mage that the stranger’s tattoo affects. Non-mages may recognize it simply as a magical or unusual tattoo on a heraldry-6 or IQ-8 roll. Of course, it is hard to recognize something if it is not visible, and there are two good reasons to be secretive:

The last thing you want to do in a magical contest is give away information about yourself, and the local citizenry your character meets in his travels may not be very hospitable to a known mage, especially one that covers his body in “blasphemous symbols.”

The Big and Tall (or Slim and Small)

When dealing with larger (or significantly smaller) folk, no adjustment need be made, since the amount of magic required is the same. The smaller the tattoo, the less area to cover, but the greater the intricacy. It’s difficult to distribute a like amount of ink on a surface half as big without obliterating the image.

The only real sore spot relates to familiar tattoos and companion tattoos. In the case of an extremely large creature such as a giant, the GM may want to allow a larger creature to be placed in a tattoo upon the recipient in question. In such a case, multiply the HP/area times the various costs.

Example: Humongous the Hill Giant wants an 8 HP Lynx tattooed on his chest.

The GM decides that Humongous is about 1.6 times as tall, wide, and deep as a normal man. He simply multiplies $1.6 \times 1.6 \times 1.6$ to arrive at a rough multiple of 4. This quadruples all costs related to the emplacement of the tattoo, as well as the HPs of creature that can occupy a size 1 tattoo. This increases the cost of Humongous’ Lynx tattoo to 4 times normal, but it also means that the tattoo only occupies a size 2 area.



Summary

There are as many ways to use this concept as there are symbols and pictures that can be drawn by the human (and non-human) hand. Simply acquiring such a tattoo could be the seed for many different adventures, whether it is a PC seeking one or a group trying to stop an already dangerous antagonist from obtaining one. The knowledge may be lost to your game world, and acquiring it could be a series of adventures which would call upon a number of different skills.

I must say, in closing, that a power gamer could find ways to abuse these rules despite the various safeties in place. The object of this article, like any other, is to enhance, not unbalance, your game. If the PCs abuse these options, maybe they will stroll through a mana draining trap that sucks the power from the tattoos. Good luck, and have fun!

Low-Tech Economies

Silk and Spices:

The Historical/Fantasy Merchant Campaign

To get away from hack-and-slash in fantasy campaigns, many gamers are turning to economic development, building modest fiefs or engaging in trade. It's not a bad choice. After all, the life of a merchant and his companions combines travel to exotic lands to match the grandest heroic campaign with the subtlest social and political machinations imaginable. However, few games provide much direction for day-to-day transactions so important to carrying on trade. This article is intended to remedy some of that lack, describing low-tech economies and merchant negotiations in useful game terms.



The Ancient Economy for Gamers

One of the most important details in merchant campaigns is how the economy works. The problem with the economies implied by many fantasy games is that they look like modern, consumer-oriented capitalist economies. There are convenient shops where characters can slap a stack of coins down on the counter and walk out with whatever they were after at a stable, listed price. This is convenient, but unrealistic. Ancient economies bear little

by Matt Riggsby

resemblance to the modern economy, and neither should economies of low-tech fantasy societies.

Making a living as a merchant in a low-tech setting is remarkably difficult. The merchant must raise capital in a setting where capital is very hard to accumulate, travel to lands only slightly understood, and transport expensive goods at enormous personal risk to sell on a fundamentally unstable market. Each difficulty is an opportunity for adventure, however. Is a merchant's favorite commodity being taxed? Perhaps he can talk his ruler into eliminating the tax or, better yet, exempting him while taxing his competitors. Is a competitor getting better prices at the same source? It's time to find out who (or what) he knows. There are several points to keep in mind about a low-tech economy:

- Money is scarce. Literally. Taxes are regularly levied in grain and livestock, and even employees of a powerful lord or wealthy merchant are paid with room and board, jugs of wine, or new clothing, in addition to a small cash stipend. Characters should expect to trade goods at least in part for other goods and only gradually convert them to money. If a merchant absolutely must sell immediately for money, he will have to accept a lower price.

- Prices are unstable. Peasant farmers, the basis of any low-tech economy, perch on a narrow margin between surplus and starvation. A small variation in the weather can cause huge variations in food prices. The price of grain one year is often twice as much (for a bad year) or half as much (for a good year) as the year before. Variations in food prices in turn effect the cost of labor and, ultimately, the prices of everything. "Average" prices were actually relatively stable, with an annual inflation rate of 1% or less for most of antiquity and the Middle Ages. Goods were rarely available at that average price, however; rather they varied wildly in a broad but stable range.

- Travel is difficult. Roads are bad, navigation is primitive, and most people distrust strangers. In many places, foreigners have few or no legal rights and, without guards or native allies, can be robbed or murdered with impunity. Information is hard to come by and unreliable when it can be found. What news there is arrives in the form of traveler's tales and occasional letters circulating among scholars and the upper classes. News from one city may reach a neighbor fairly quickly, but news from a more remote area is likely to be inaccurate, out of date, or entirely fictional.

- The price of doing business is high. Many large transactions are taxed. The tax is typically small (on the order of modern sales taxes), but even a small tax will eat into an already small profit margin. Merchants might be required to belong to a guild and buy the right to trade and travel freely, which means that an individual merchant must buy his way in and pay regular fees. Apart from taxes, moving

goods from one place to another is quite costly. Local rulers charge steep tolls for use of the roads, when there are roads at all, and even over the relatively good roads of the Roman Empire, the cost of transport could double the price of a load of grain after about a hundred miles. And, of course, the wary traveler may want to hire guards to protect his valuable cargo against pirates and bandits . . .

● Many goods aren't worth trading. Individual farmers and craftsmen make a modest profit by selling their own goods, but rarely enough to justify adding a merchant as a middleman. If, for example, a merchant were to buy wheat and take it to a city for sale, he would have to pay the farmer a price close to what he had been getting before in order to make it worth selling. Once he got to the city, he would have to sell it for more than what the farmer had been getting in order to turn a profit. Since he is competing against a thousand other farmers (or, at best, a hundred other merchants) selling the same product, he isn't likely to make much of a profit. A merchant may make a living from transporting produce and selling small goods, but he won't get rich. The real money is in rare materials and exotic items that would be otherwise unavailable, but those goods are the hardest to get.

● Land is the only reliable wealth. Given the difficulties of trade, wealth is measured not in coins but in acres. A good-sized plot of land with a few tenants won't bring a huge income, but it will yield enough food to live off of and a bit of extra labor to draw from in the off-season. More importantly, it won't sink in a storm, rot in a storehouse or be stolen by bandits. Even after fire, plague or war, the land itself will still be there. Historically, merchants didn't become more interested in reinvesting profits than in buying land and taking on the trappings of country gentlemen till the 16th century.

● Trade isn't a respectable occupation. Many societies (including imperial Rome, imperial China, and medieval Japan and Europe) had an abiding distrust of merchants. Unlike farmers and craftsmen, merchants produce nothing visible, so their value to society is not immediately obvious. It was difficult for many to imagine that one could turn a profit on a monetary transaction without the other party coming out behind. As a result, many societies regarded merchants as little more than con men.



Running the Marketplace

Whatever other complications there may be, the core of a merchant campaign is buying and selling. The rules below aid the GM in determining costs for transported goods. First, the GM determines the price of goods at their source. Second, the merchant who buys them must

carry the goods to his destination. Finally, the GM determines the price the merchant can get for the goods once brought to market.

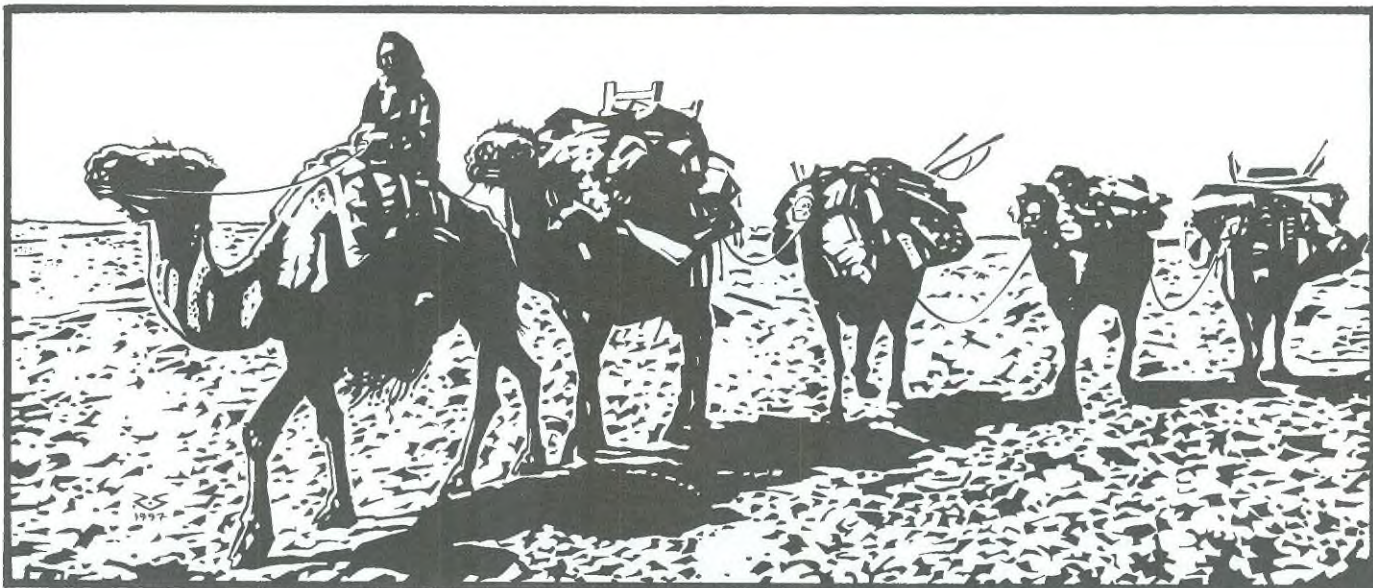
Buying

Consult the list below when a merchant wants to buy something at or near its source, not at its destination. The GM should feel free to arbitrarily pick prices in the given ranges to reflect quality and scarcity or abundance. Individual items may be bought at the prices given in equipment lists in appropriate world books. The purchaser should roll a Quick Contest of Merchant Skill with the seller. The sale price is adjusted by 2% in favor of the winner per point he won the contest by to a maximum of 20%.

Food	Cost
Beer	\$4-10/gallon
Wine, common	\$5-15/gallon
Wine, fine	\$15-80+/gallon
Distilled liquor	\$20-100+/gallon
Oil (olive, sesame or other edible oil)	\$4-8/gallon
Vinegar	\$3-7.5/gallon
Condiments (fish sauce, flavored pastes, etc.)	\$5-12/gallon
Grain, low grade (coarse oats, millet, etc.)	\$0.1-0.75/lb.
Grain, high grade (soft wheat, fine rice, etc.)	\$0.5-1.5/lb.
Flour	increase grain cost by 50%
Beans	\$0.75-2.5/lb.
Nuts	\$2-5/lb.
Vegetables, dried	\$3.25-7.25/lb.
Fruits, dried	\$3.75-8/lb.
Meat, preserved	\$5-10/lb.
Confections (candied flower petals, sweetened pastes)	\$6-30/lb.
Herbs, dried	\$2.5-\$5.75/lb.
Spices	\$2.75-\$7.25/lb.

Textiles	Cost
Raw wool	\$3-12/lb.
Raw linen/cotton	\$3-10/lb.
Raw silk	\$5-45/lb.
Leather (leather weighs 2-5 lb./square yard, depending on thickness)	\$15-40/sq. yd.
Fur (furs weigh 1.75-5 lb. per square yard)	\$20-100/sq. yd.
Wool cloth (wool cloth weighs 1.75-4 lb. per square yard)	\$6-30/sq. yd.
Linen/cotton cloth (cotton and linen weigh 0.75-1.5 lb. per square yard)	\$6-30/sq. yd.
Silk cloth (silk cloth weighs 0.25-1 lb. per square yard)	\$10-70/sq. yd.

Other Goods	Cost
Perfumes	\$10-50/oz.
Beeswax	\$3.5-8/lb.
Ivory	\$12-20/lb.



Shipping

While low-tech vehicles have a cargo capacity of 15-20 lb. per cubic foot, most goods weigh at least 30 lb. per cubic foot, so it is far easier to overload a ship than to overfill the hold. If it becomes important to know a cargo's volume, most foodstuffs weigh 35 to 50 pounds per cubic foot, cloth and clothing weigh 45 to 60 lb./cf., wood weighs 35 to 60 lb./cf., and stone and ores weigh 150 to 200 lb./cf. With the exception of some raw materials (lumber, metal ingots, etc.), goods must be shipped in crates, casks or other packing material. Packing materials have a weight of 10% of the goods carried. At TLs 1 and 2, liquid goods are transported in heavy ceramic vessels which weigh as much as the goods themselves. At TL3, wooden casks and glass bottles come into use and packing weight drops to 10% of the cargo's weight.

Overland transport is expensive, but often no alternative exists. Traveling with loads of goods is heavy work, and pack animals may need to eat more as a result. The GM may adjust water requirements as necessary for climate. Prices for grain may be determined using the chart above. Common pack animals may be fed the cheapest grains available. Hay is cheap but not free in a low-tech economy. Hay costs 25% as much as the cheapest grain. Unless a caravan is heading across a desert, fodder for the animals (and for the caravan's personnel) may be bought along the way.

A caravan should have at least one driver for every cart or two or three animals, plus one packer (Packing skill 15+) for every 20. In addition, a caravan may need guides, a master (if different from the merchant forming the caravan) and assistants, and guards. Some caravans take "passengers" who pay for the privilege of traveling safely with the caravan through hostile territory. If so, the caravan master may hire servants to look after them. Finally, the caravan master will be responsible for any tolls along the way. Tolls are usually low (a silver or two per man, a little more for every animal or cart), but they can add up if the caravan goes through the territories of a number of different rulers.

Using a ship requires either buying a vessel or reaching an arrangement with a ship owner, equivalent to chartering it. A merchant ship needs at least a captain and several sailors. For extended journeys, it may need a cook, navigator and carpenter. For sailing in difficult waters close to land, it may also need a pilot (a navigator/steersman familiar with a particular part of the sea).

Clearly, this can get quite expensive. If there are enough merchants in one place to form partnerships, it is common for them to pool resources for extended trading expeditions. For example, several merchants might hire a ship, each paying for a sailor and an appropriate portion of the "rent" on the ship and receiving in turn a share of the cargo space and enough space on deck for each merchant (or his agent) to set up a tent.

Selling

When a merchant wants to buy or sell something that has been shipped a significant distance, the GM must determine the local price. Using the buying chart above, the GM should determine the price of the commodity at the source nearest the place of sale (which is not necessarily the price at the merchant's source!), roll four dice, add appropriate modifiers, and consult the chart below. The result is a percentage of the price at the nearest source. The local price reflects conditions of abundance or scarcity at the point of sale, difficulty of transport, demand for the commodity, and the ability of people at the selling point to pay a fair price. If the merchant is trying to buy or sell a commodity within 50 miles of a source, this step should be omitted and the buyer and seller should skip to a Contest of Merchant Skill. Modifiers for exotic versions of locally produced commodities may be reduced as the GM sees fit. An otherwise unremarkable type of grain from half a world away is, after all, still just grain. The GM should also feel free to limit the amount of any commodity the merchant can sell, particularly in poor or sparsely populated areas. No matter how good he is, no merchant will get fair market value for a matching pair of fine broadswords in a small village.

After the local price is determined, the seller should roll a Contest of Merchant Skill against the buyer. The winner adjusts the final price in his favor by another 2% for every point by which he won the contest to a maximum 20%. If the merchant doesn't like the price he is offered, he can keep his goods and wait for the market to improve. The GM should make a new roll at least every month of game time, by which time prevailing conditions may have changed. During that time, however, stored goods may be subject to spoilage and pilfering.

Local Price

Roll	% of Price at Source	Roll	% of Price at Source
0 or less	33%		
1	45%	13	100%
2	50%	14	100%
3	60%	15	105%
4	66%	16	110%
5	75%	17	115%
6	80%	18	120%
7	85%	19	125%
8	90%	20	135%
9	93%	21	145%
10	95%	22	160%
11	98%	23	175%
12	100%	24	200%

Add an additional 25% for every point above 24.

Modifiers

Shortest known route to nearest source by water (ocean, canal or navigable river):

- 50-150 miles: +1
- 150-250 miles: +2
- 250-500 miles: +3
- 500-700 miles: +4
- Over 700 miles: +5, +1 for every additional 200 miles

- Shortest known route to nearest source by land:
 - 50-100 miles: +1
 - 100-200 miles: +2
 - 200-300 miles: +3
 - Over 300 miles: +4, +1 for every additional 200 miles
- Regular trade route interrupted by weather, war, etc.: +3
- Commodity is completely unfamiliar at point of sale: -3 or more
- Unusually high imports of that commodity: -3
- Economic troubles at point of sale: -1 to -5
- Commodity is illegal at point of sale: +3
- Foods sold in a bad harvest year: +3 or more
- Common foods (e.g.: grains, olives, beer) sold in a good harvest year: -3 or more
- Foods sold during or immediately after a siege: +5
- Specific luxury good "in vogue": +4
- Specific luxury good out of fashion: -5
- Modifiers for land and sea distance are cumulative if the route goes over both land and sea. For example, if some exotic silks must be carried 250 miles by sea (+3) and another 75 miles inland (+1), the total modifier is +4. Use the lowest applicable modifier for distance. Merchants cannot increase the price of their goods by taking a roundabout route.

Conversion to Other Game Systems

While the economy rules are written for *GURPS*, they can be used in many other game systems with a little modification.

GURPS' "\$" is a generic symbol for the standard unit of currency, be it dollars in a modern-day campaign, credits in a SF setting, silver pieces in a fantasy world, and so on. In other game systems, simply substitute the "standard" denomination for \$. For example, in the *Harn* system, the price might represent copper pennies, while in *D&D* it would probably represent gold pieces.

A Contest of Skills has two characters roll against their skill and compare the magnitude of their success or failure. This can be reproduced in any skill-based system. In a d100-based skill system, such as *Runequest*, both characters should roll against the most applicable skill on d100 and determine their success relative to their skill (for example, a merchant with a skill of 60 who rolls a 40 has succeeded by 20). Find the difference between relative successes or failures (e.g.: one merchant succeeds by 12, the other by 33; the winner beats the loser by 33-12 = 21) and divide by 2.5 to determine the percentage cost adjustment for the winner. In a system that uses dice pools and numbers of successful rolls, such as *Shadowrun* and White Wolf's *World of Darkness* games, simply subtract the number of the loser's successes from the winner's and multiply by 2 to get the percentage adjustment.



Fire and Blood

Feudal Lords in a *GURPS Fantasy* or *Middle Ages* Campaign

by S.A. Fisher

The real nobility of the Middle Ages lived a life of political intrigue and bloody battles. Leading their forces to war, putting enemy villages to the torch, and defending their lands from rival lords was a nobleman's way of life. They were a rough and brutal lot, all too accustomed to the fire and blood of medieval warfare; in fact, it was their reason for existence in the feudal triangle. The peasants worked, the clergy prayed, but the nobility *fought*.

This article presents players with the chance to play feudal rulers of great influence and power, with armies standing at the ready (and the responsibility and danger that comes with that power). The following rules can be used to create noble PCs for a *GURPS Middle Ages* or *Fantasy* campaign.

CHARACTER CREATION

The suggested level for land-holding feudal lords is 200 to 300 points, depending on the campaign's power level. This high point total is to allow for various advantages required of a noble PC. A starting point total of 200 points works well for low-level knights and barons, while dukes and kings require 300 points or more.

The most important advantage for feudal lords is Status; it determines income and station in society, as well as raw political power. The lowest noble is the landed knight, Status 3, and the highest is the king, with Status 7. The higher the noble's Status, the more land and people he rules – landed knights hold the smallest fiefs, while more powerful nobles hold immense fiefdoms (duchies, earldoms, or baronies) as large as a quarter of the kingdom.

In addition to Status, other advantages are necessary to recreate the sweeping powers of a feudal noble. The 15-point level of Legal Enforcement Powers is required; nobles could search and seize property, conduct a trial and even execute commoners and freemen. Feudal lords should also have the Legal Immunity advantage (p. CI27) at the 15-point level. Nobles did not answer to common courts, but only to special trials held by other nobles, or the king.

Another item of concern for noble characters is Wealth. A feudal lord could be a poor knight with a few hundred acres of land and a shabby, timber tower, or a rich duke with hundreds of square miles in his domain, with several stone castles and a walled city or two. Noble PCs should be Wealthy or better. A knight of merely Comfortable wealth would be considered poor by his peers! The more powerful nobles of a kingdom should have Very Wealthy, Filthy Rich, or Multimillion-aire, since they must buy great castles and fortresses with their starting wealth.

A character's wealth level should also fit the player's character concept. The GM and player should work together to provide a good reason if there is great disparity between Wealth and Status.

Besides the above requirements, the player has other advantages to consider. Voice, Charisma, Empathy, Reputation (good or bad), Ally or Ally Group (such as a circle of knights, a loyal squire or a competent wife), Patron (the noble's liege lord, or a powerful clergyman such as a Bishop or Archbishop) would all be quite useful. Appropriate disadvantages include Ignorance or Uneducated (for commoners who were knighted on the field of battle and haven't been taught noble skills yet, or for lords who cannot fight or ride), as well as Duty. The noble's foremost Duty is to his liege lord. This is a -5 to -10 point disadvantage, depending on the frequency of the call

for military service (GMs may adjust this point level if they feel that feudal duty would be different in their campaign). Almost any other disadvantage will work for noble characters, though particularly nasty ones will cause many problems. A noble with Sadism and a dungeon full of prisoners is just asking for trouble! Other appropriate disadvantages for feudal lords include Bad Temper, Bully, Code of Honor, all the various Compulsive Behaviors (Compulsive Spending was very common), Megalomania, Enemy, and Dependents (which could be squires, children, wives, younger siblings, etc.).

Skills useful to a lord include Diplomacy, Intimidation, Tactics, Strategy, Savoir-Faire, Riding, Administration, various Languages, Heraldry, Law, Area Knowledge of personal lands, Leadership, Fast-Talk, Merchant, Bard, and Interrogation. Skills such as Falconry, Dancing, Poetry, Gambling, Carousing, Chess, Theology, Philosophy, Calligraphy, Writing, Gardening, History, Appreciate Beauty (horses, armor, and weapons were common specializations), Literature, and Naturalist might be included in a nobleman's courtly training.

Players and GMs are encouraged to see other *GURPS* worldbooks. Some that might help are *Arabian Nights*, *Fantasy, Middle Ages 1*, *Russia, Vikings* and *Camelot*. These can add ideas on creating noble characters.

THE FIEFDOM AND THE FEUDAL LORD

In the *GURPS Basic Set* it is assumed that at a certain Status level the character has a fiefdom (that is, the character's *title* has lands, not the character himself). This was not always the case in history. Not all lords had the same amount of land; some barons had three times as much land as other barons, and a much higher income as a result. To simulate this, GMs may allow noblemen to buy more land than the default level presented in the Job Table. This should be treated as a special case of the optional temporary wealth rule (see sidebar, p. CI18). For every 15 character points spent, the lord's land holdings are increased by 20%. Thus, for a landed knight with two levels of extra land, his total land holdings would be 2,800 acres of productive land, instead of the default level of 2,000, and his income would be \$5,600 a month, not \$4,000. This increases the lord's income, but not starting wealth. The GM may also allow nobles to select a similar disadvantage, worth -10 points per level.

Fire and Blood

Economy, Income AND Expenses

The income of a medieval lord depended almost entirely on the produce of his fiefdom. The income levels presented in this article assume that each acre of productive land (whether it be forest for wood and game, fields for agricultural produce, bog for peat or mountains for stone) will produce roughly two *GURPS* \$ a month in various rents and taxes for the lord; the exact source of monthly income, such as taxes from gristmills, bridges, bakeovens, wine presses, etc., will be left for the GM to determine, if he so desires. In the *Basic Set*, one *GURPS* \$ is the equivalent of one copper farthing (at four farthings to a penny, 12 pennies to the shilling and 20 shillings to the pound). Use this conversion

rate, rather than the one presented in *GURPS Middle Ages 1*, as it simulates the inflated, high-demand, low-supply economy of the mid-13th and 14th centuries better.

Economics 101

By comparing the Job Table presented here with the one in *Fantasy* or *Middle Ages 1*, it is obvious that there is a *tremendous* difference in income between the peasant and his lord, or even a baron and his king. This is historically accurate. The disparity between the poor and the rich has always existed, and is one of the reasons

that rebellion was so common. Comparison of the average family income of today with the salary of a multinational, corporate CEO echoes the difference between the peasant and his lord during the Middle Ages.

Expenses: Taking it All Away

The Cost of Living table on p. B191 lists the minimum amount that the lord can spend and still maintain his Status level. This includes the cost for appropriate food and clothing, church tithes, taxes and so on, for the noble and his immediate family. The GM is the final authority on what is or is not included in the listed Cost of Living. If the PC does not pay the Cost of Living for his Status level, the GM should assign the character a Reaction penalty until the minimum can be paid again. This Reaction penalty should apply to most everyone that knows about the lord's situation, even those of lower Status. Rich merchants will sneer, serfs will be embarrassed or disgusted with their lord's lack of management skills (which almost always means more taxes and work for the serfs), and soldiers may seek employment elsewhere. Eventually the noble's Status will drop permanently if the proper Cost of Living is not paid.





Once the Cost of Living is subtracted from the noble's monthly income, the remainder can be used to pay retainers, soldiers/men-at-arms, bureaucrats, and scribes; and for improvements and repairs of the lord's castle or manor house; or for ransoms of captured liege lords, gifts to well-serving friends; dowries for daughters; inheritance for younger sons (or to cover the spending habits of a wife with Compulsive Spending or Generosity), and basically anything else that the GM can come up with. GMs are encouraged to work hard at draining a noble's coffers, and exploiting the economic, social, or organizational flaws that a lord may create by refusing to spend income on necessary expenses (like town guards for keeping the peace, or clerks and bureaucrats for collecting taxes and keeping accounts).

A powerful lord will have a great many servants working for him, and will spend most of his income on these servants. Cooks, grooms, blacksmiths, soldiers and so on must be fed and provided for. Serfs and peasants don't count though – only those individuals that work directly for the lord. The lord must pay the Cost of Living for each person that works for him. Ten knights are much more costly to the lord, for instance, than 10 common soldiers; the knights are nobles themselves, and will require the added expense of meat and spices, fine clothes as gifts, and better lodging and mounts. GMs may require that the PC use the wages listed on the various Job Tables as a guide for further compensation as well. The GM is the final authority on this subject, however, because a famine, plague or war in the realm could drive the prices up or down accordingly.

Costs for large purchases should be determined by the GM on a case-by-case situation. A manor house or castle should be paid for from the lord's starting wealth; even though the PC may have inherited the structure, the character must still pay for it from his starting wealth. A timber-framed, wattle and daub peasant house with a thatched roof (perhaps 15' by 45') would cost about \$2,500. A large manor house of similar construction, with a timber barbican and various outbuildings, a barn, smokehouse, hen house and so on, might cost \$10,000. Lead, slate, or tile roofs, stone walls, and glass windows could drive the cost to two or three times this. As a rule, local resources and labor are cheap, but shipping expenses will drive the cost of imported construction materials up very quickly. A large, extensive stone castle should cost at least \$50,000, while a simple, three-story stone tower with a slate roof might cost \$20,000. Monthly maintenance costs would be about 5% of the total cost of the structure. Furnishings, livestock, and tools will cost an additional 50% to 100% of the cost of the structure. Great lords usually had two or three stone castles and several smaller timber forts scattered across their lands.

Those wishing to purchase or build sailing vessels should see the campaign chapter in *GURPS Vehicles*, or the chapter on sailing vessels in *GURPS Swashbucklers*.

GMs should note that regardless of the character's wealth level, no more than 20% of his starting wealth may be spent on adventuring gear. This can still be spent quite easily. A fine warhorse, a suit of plate and a good sword can be very costly. The use of a character point for a month's income should be a rare occurrence during the campaign, and no more than two points should be allowed during character creation.

Campaigns

With mighty dukes and earls as characters, the GM must have exciting, well-planned adventures, and a long-term story in mind. The stick-and-carrot approach, using treasure as a lure, will not work with rich nobles. They have almost everything money can buy already! However, the promise of more power and respect, and a larger fiefdom, works just fine. The GM must remember that the

JOB TABLE

All these positions are considered Wealthy jobs, and monthly income will vary with the lord's wealth level.

	<i>Success Roll</i>	<i>Critical Failure</i>
Landed Knight (Status 3, any weapon skills totaling 60+, Legal Enforcement Powers (15), Legal Immunity (15), Claim to Hospitality (10), appropriate Duty, Wealthy+, 1,200 acres or more), \$2 × acres owned	Best PR	2d/3d, C, lose horse, armor
Baron (Status 4, any weapon skills totaling 60+, Legal Enforcement Powers (15), Legal Immunity (15), Claim to Hospitality (10), appropriate Duty, Wealthy+, 20,000 acres or more), \$2 × acres owned	Best PR	-4i, 2d/3d, C, lose title
Earl (Status 5, any weapon skills totaling 60+, Legal Enforcement Powers (15), Legal Immunity (15), Claim to Hospitality (10), appropriate Duty, Wealthy+, 100,000 acres or more), \$2 × acres owned	Best PR	-4i, 2d/3d, C, lose title
Duke (Status 6, any weapon skills totaling 60+, Legal Enforcement Powers (15), Legal Immunity (15), Claim to Hospitality (10), appropriate Duty, Wealthy+, 300,000 acres or more), \$2 × acres owned	Best PR	-4i, 2d/3d, C, lose title
King (Status 7+, any weapon skills totaling 60+, Legal Enforcement Powers (15), Legal Immunity (15), Claim to Hospitality (10), Filthy Rich+, appropriate Duty, 1.2 million acres+), \$2 × acres owned	Best PR	-4i, 2d/3d, C, lose title

PCs are the power in the realm. Open threats of force will not scare them, and other blatant, strong-arm tactics are likely to be met with brutality. A subtle game of political cat and mouse, with more lands as the prize, is sometimes a welcome change from open warfare, and a mixture of warfare and political intrigue works best. Below are just a few suggestions for campaign ideas and themes. For other ideas, see the various *GURPS* worldbooks.

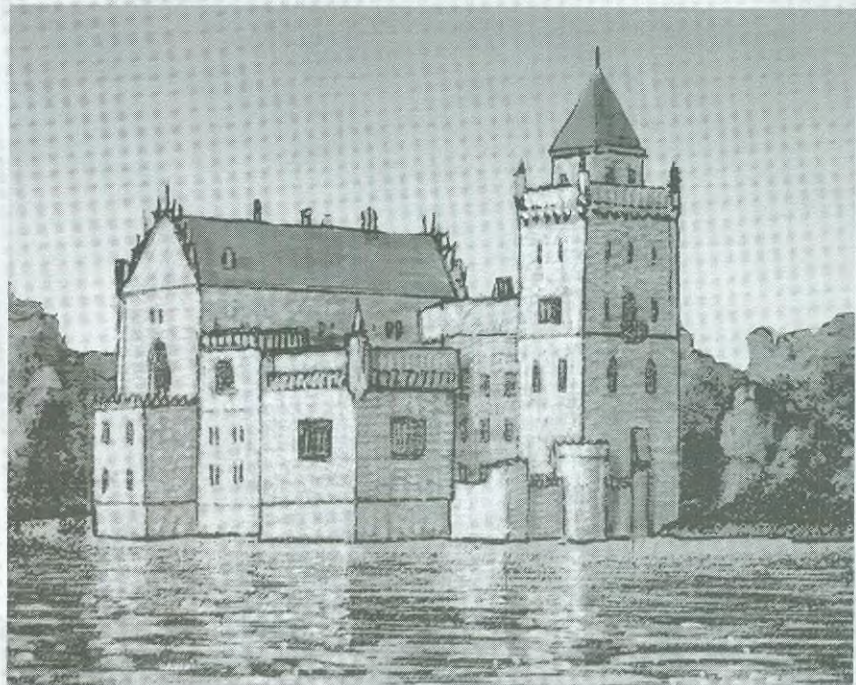
A Few Good Men: One of the PCs is a baron or duke, and the rest of the party is made up of his liege men, stewards, sergeant-at-arms or other leaders. These lower-level PCs will act as counselors and military commanders, and assist the liege lord in making and enforcing hard decisions. The campaign should center around the interaction of the various characters as they deal with the adversities of the campaign, which could range from peasant rebellion to bandit raids.

The Conquest: In this type of campaign, the players are low-level barons or landed knights marching off to invade another land. This could be for religious reasons, such as the Crusades, or for more profitable or personal reasons, such as the Hundred Years' War. The GM should become familiar with *GURPS* Mass Combat System before beginning this type of campaign. Characters may face ambush, turncoat rebels, plague, famine, massive bloody battles and deadly skirmishes on an almost daily basis.

Rebellion: The lord's lands are in turmoil. Perhaps several castles have been

put to the torch in neighboring fiefs, and now an uprising has begun in his own lands. The lord must decide how to deal with the rebels, and then enforce his decision.

Intrigue: The PCs learn of a plot to overthrow the king, but do not have enough information to act on. Should they investigate until they find the truth, or just solidify their position and try for the throne themselves? If they do discover the truth, should they go to the king, or just accept the bribes and keep quiet?

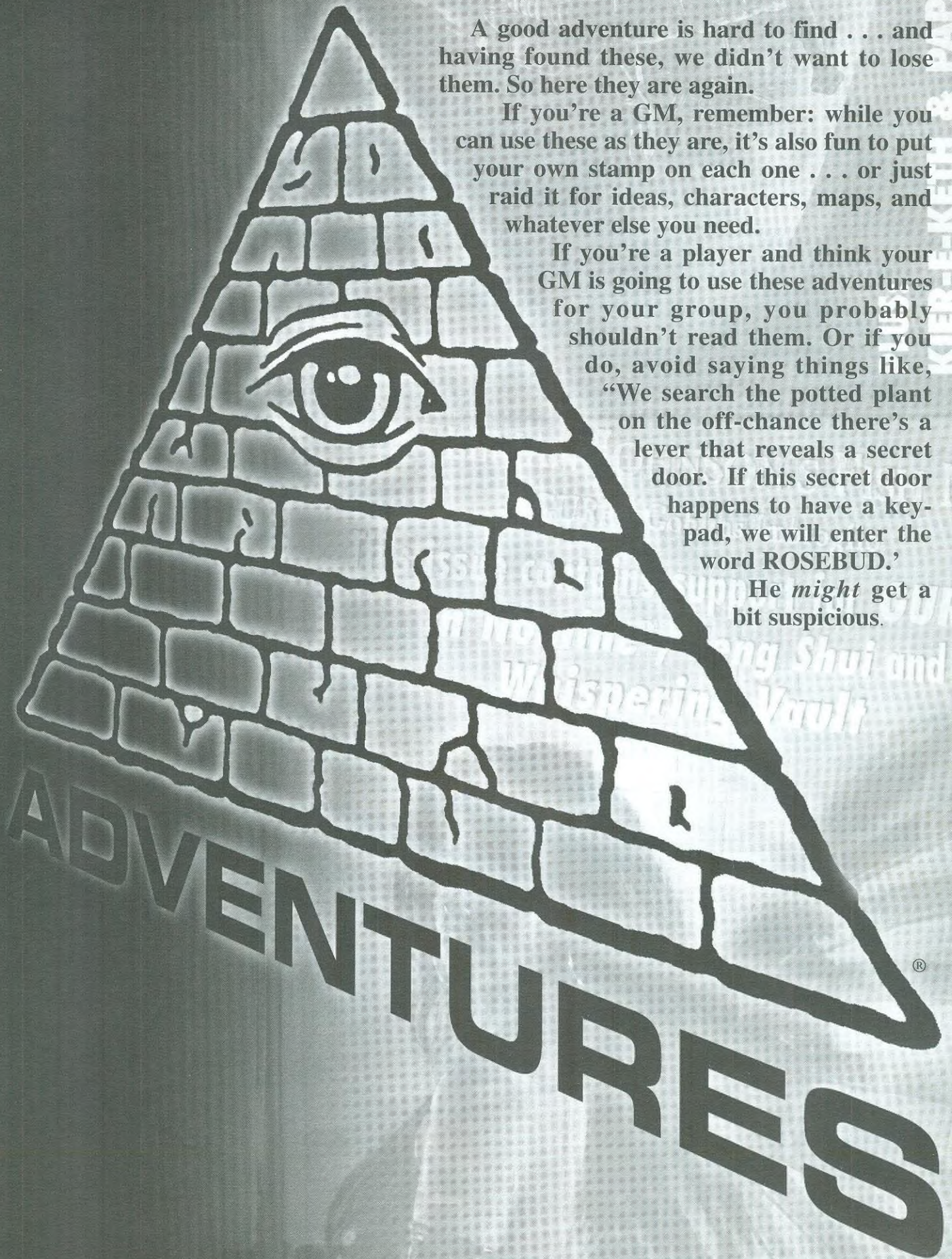


A good adventure is hard to find . . . and having found these, we didn't want to lose them. So here they are again.

If you're a GM, remember: while you can use these as they are, it's also fun to put your own stamp on each one . . . or just raid it for ideas, characters, maps, and whatever else you need.

If you're a player and think your GM is going to use these adventures for your group, you probably shouldn't read them. Or if you do, avoid saying things like, "We search the potted plant on the off-chance there's a lever that reveals a secret door. If this secret door happens to have a keypad, we will enter the word ROSEBUD."

He *might* get a bit suspicious.



ADVENTURES

Time of the Tyrants

A Roleplaying Adventure for **GURPS**
By Stephen Dedman

Introduction

Time of the Tyrants is an adventure for **GURPS Cliffhangers**, but it can easily be adapted for a variety of settings, from the old west to the present day. Because of the elements involved, **GURPS Time Travel** and **GURPS Dinosaurs** will also be necessary.

The PCs should have a range of talents. An ideal group might include a paleontologist, a big game hunter, an explorer, a mercenary, and a skeptical reporter. In a **Cliffhangers** setting, many of these individuals might be unemployed and ready to step into a possible time machine for a few simoleons; **Atomic Horror** or modern-day PCs might be employed by the TSF or motivated by curiosity, patriotism or overconfidence. "Time of the Tyrants" might also be used as for an episode in an "In the Cube" or "Infinite Worlds" campaign (see **GURPS Time Travel**). Useful skills include Paleontology (Paleozoology) (p. CI157), Survival (Forest), Camouflage; Stealth, Guns; Tracking, Anthropology; Animal Handling, Fast-Talk; Driving, and Piloting. Cowardice, entomophobia and ophiophobia are not recommended.

Dangerous Visions

The adventure begins with each PC receiving a telegram offering them "a job ideally suited to your particular talents and training," from William Mowat, noted producer of documentary films. Mowat shows the PCs photos of what seem to be late Cretaceous dinosaurs, some shot from a fixed camera position, some from the air – including shots of whole herds of Triceratops. He explains that the film comes from a Dr. David Katz, an astronomer who claims to have built a time machine. The wheelchair-bound Katz is unable to travel in the machine himself, and is seeking volunteers to make a trip back to the Cretaceous. Mowat has had the film examined by

Hollywood special effects experts, who are unable to declare the film either real or fake.

Katz will show Mowat and the PCs his "time machine" – a control room which stays in the present, and three vehicles that can be sent into the past. One is roughly breadbox-sized, designed to be carried by a weather balloon and take photos at three-minute intervals, light permitting; one is similar, but has a tripod instead of the balloon; and the third, *Prometheus*, an eight-foot sphere mounted on three spring-loaded legs. *Prometheus*, Katz explains, can carry 1,500 lbs., holds up to eight people, and has a manual control – a lever which will instantly return the capsule and its contents to the present. Unfortunately, Katz explains, the capsule's destination can not be determined or controlled precisely; the margin of error is approximately 600 years, so that anything (or anyone) left behind is probably lost forever. Katz also refuses to send anything back less than a million years, for fear of changing human history, and chose the late Cretaceous as a safe and interesting destination.

Katz offers the PCs the equivalent of their month's salary for 24 hours of risk; Mowat offers them fame.

Equipping the Party

Though a pacifist, Katz won't let the party go without at least one high-powered rifle – an H&H Express or .470 Nitro would be appropriate for the '20s or '30s, an assault rifle (AK-47 or FN-FAL) any time after 1950. If none of the PCs has such a weapon, Katz will pay for it himself. He'll also insist on the group taking a tape recorder, movie camera, and at least two 35mm still cameras, and on everyone carrying a large knife. Katz will supply all of the outdoor equipment that the capsule can hold and the PCs are willing to carry, but if they want more guns, they'll have to buy them with their own money.

First Contact

The PCs' first view of the Cretaceous will be of a small clearing in a thick forest, lit only by a crescent moon. A glance at the constellations and a successful roll on Navigation or Astronomy will reveal that they are in the northern hemisphere. A roll on (Botany or Naturalist) -2 will identify the surrounding trees as screw pines, a type that existed from the Pennsylvanian Period to the present. Further examination will reveal flowering plants (Cretaceous or later) but no grasses, and cockroaches from 1 to 3 inches long. There is a thunderstorm approaching from the south, the occasional rustle of branches, frogs croaking, and a lot of insect noises, but no sign of any animals larger than the PCs themselves within sight of the capsule.

If the PCs leave *Prometheus* to explore the forest by night and make a successful Tracking roll, they will discover some fresh two-toed footprints, similar to those of an ostrich. A roll on Paleozoology will identify them as belonging to a small (roughly human-sized) carnivorous dinosaur. While the PCs are examining the prints, the Troodons who made them will attack.

The Troodons – a pack of seven – have Stealth-16, Night Vision, and enough cunning to take advantage of the thunderstorm; they will try to take the party by surprise. They have never seen humans moving about at night, and assume the PCs are large but harmless mammals. The Troodons will retreat if they receive any wounds that bleed, but they will not be scared by fire, electric light, or the sound of shooting.



If the PCs decide to stick close to the capsule until sunrise, the Troodons will attack their camp instead, tearing their way into tents and stealing anything unfastened and small enough for them to carry away.

The Troodons are the only dinosaurs the PCs will encounter in the forest that night, though they may see small mammals (opossums and shrews), snakes (non-venomous constrictors up to 40 feet long), and lizards.

The Herd

Shortly after sunrise, the PCs should find their way out of the forest and down to the nearby river. There, they will see a flock of Pterodaustro standing and feeding in the nearby shallows, and a huge crowd of Triceratops and Parasaurolophus lined up on the other bank, intently drinking. The river is approximately 20 feet across, 7 feet deep at its deepest, and contains nothing worse than a few leeches. The ground on either bank is swampy and riddled with twisted roots (very bad terrain). Twelve to 15 feet from the water, the ground becomes slightly smoother and drier (bad terrain).

Occasionally, a Parasaurolophus will look up and around, like a sentry. If the PCs remain unobtrusive (roll Stealth +5), they will have 1d+1 minutes to observe and photograph the herbivores before the wind changes direction, enabling the Parasaurolophus to smell them. When that happens, or if the PCs do something likely to startle the dinosaurs – jumping into the river, taking a flash photograph, firing a gun, etc. – the male Parasaurolophus will begin to bellow lowly and slowly wave their brightly colored tails in the air, the Pterodaustro will fly away, and all the female and juvenile dinosaurs will back away from the river and start running. The male Parasaurolophus will soon follow, and then the male Triceratops will retreat and rejoin the herd as it thunders away along the riverbank.

If the PCs follow the dinosaurs, they will see an open all-terrain vehicle approaching the herds from the rear. When it is approximately 100 yards behind the largest male, and 300 yards from the PCs, the ATV will stop and the passenger will stand. A PC who rolls on vision (-6 without binoculars) will notice that the passenger – clad in jungle cammo – is aiming something that looks like a carbine gleaming with little lights.

The passenger – Graf Ohlendorf – takes three turns to aim before firing. His weapon, a TL10 dinosaur laser, does 26d impaling damage; if the PCs don't interfere, he will fell his quarry with one shot, and the herds will continue on their way over the rough ground. Ohlendorf will then sit down, and the ATV will drive up to the Triceratops. Ohlendorf will get out and admire the dead dinosaur, and the driver – Gunther – will attach a homing beacon to the corpse. Ohlendorf and Gunther will wait by the body until the Skytruck (see sidebar) arrives to collect it, and then drive away. If the PCs have not made their presence obvious by this time, Gunther may notice them (Sense roll 13 versus the lowest Stealth skill in the group) and point them out to Ohlendorf, who will then study them through his televiewer.

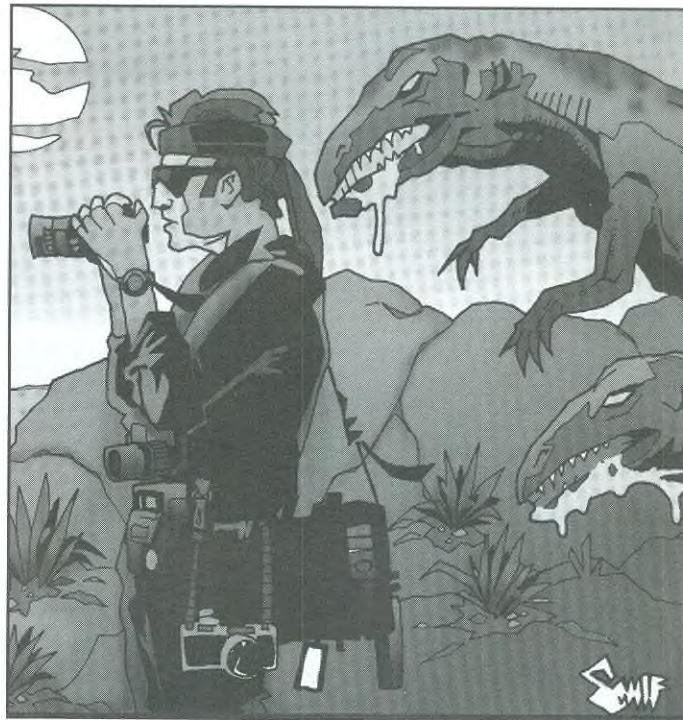
How Ohlendorf reacts to the PCs will depend on their appearance. His world is thoroughly Aryanized, thanks to bodysculpting and genetic engineering as well as the extermination camps of previous centuries. A completely Caucasian party will be greeted with shouts and smiles, but anyone with dark skin or Asian features will be fired on. Fortunately, the first shot will miss, blasting a tree; after that, the PCs will have to fend for themselves.

If the PCs cross the river, Ohlendorf will want to take at least one of them back to Camp Mengele as a curio – preferably the most attractive female and/or the most distinctive male, and preferably alive. If the PCs refuse to cooperate, Ohlendorf will use his Gauss needler (rather than his dinosaur laser) to “persuade” them. The first two needles in the clip are tracers; they do no damage, but transmit a homing signal detectable within 10 miles.

If it is necessary to rescue the PCs, have the herds run into a pair of T. rex and stampede back towards the ATV, persuading Ohlendorf and Gunther to abandon their trophies and drive away hurriedly.

Marooned!

When the PCs return to *Prometheus*, they will see that the skytruck (piloted by Koch) has reached it first and is raising the timeship with its tractor beam as it did the Triceratops. An unencumbered person 5”8”+ in height with Jumping skill or ST of 13+ will have one chance to jump for a landing leg (make a DX roll) before it’s out of



reach. *Prometheus* is being lifted towards the skytruck, 100 feet above.

The flight back to Camp Mengele takes 12 minutes (56 miles at 280 mph). A person clinging to a landing leg will have to roll on (ST-Enc level) every (ST-Enc level) minutes not to fall off. The skytruck will fly at least 30 feet above the treetops, or 90 feet above the ground; a merciful GM might put a swamp or lake underneath any PC who lets go. PCs holding onto the legs cannot reach the skytruck, but they may be able to climb into *Prometheus*. The door is accessible from two of the three legs; a roll on Climbing or Acrobatics is needed to move from one leg to another, open the door, or enter the capsule.

What’s going on here?

This is a summary for the GM, to help him pull together the various threads of the narrative.

The adventure as written starts between the World Wars, in our own history. The GM can set the exact starting date to fit the campaign. If the adventure starts after WWII, then perhaps the Nazis are from an alternate time track.

The PCs travel to the Cretaceous Era. There, they meet other time travelers. These are Nazis from the 23rd century . . . in a history in which the Reich prevailed in WWII. They have high technology and a well-developed science of time travel.

The PCs’ immediate challenge, of course, is to escape from their Nazi captors in the past, and return to their own time. This ends the adventure as written.

What happens next? Did they bring back enough knowledge to help nip the Nazi menace in the bud? If this involves bringing 23rd-century technology to help the Allies, well and good!

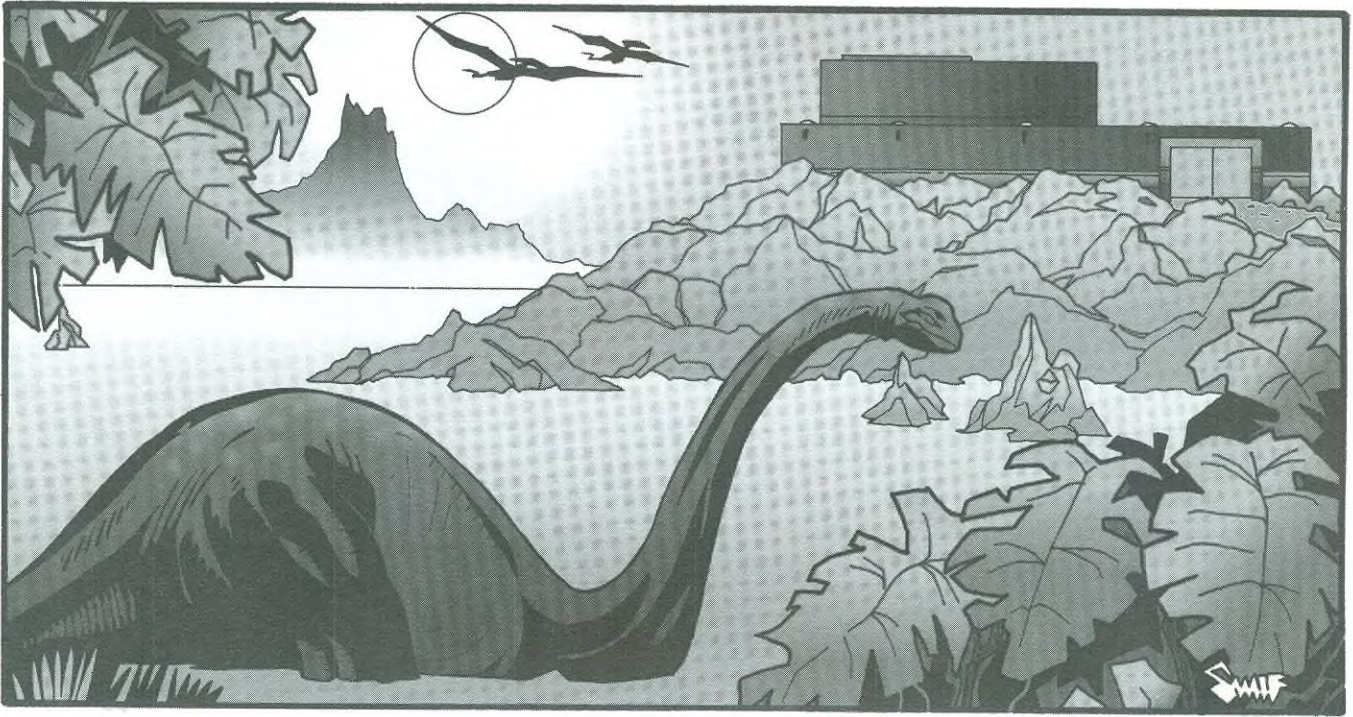
Does this create a new time stream and keep the “real” present from happening, or do the Allies use their ultra-tech in secret? If so, what happens after the war? Is it concealed by a government conspiracy?

And do the time-traveling Nazis have agents in the PCs’ own time to protect their timestream from meddlers? That’s up to the GM!

Trophies

The fate of any PCs taken to Camp Mengele (either by Ohlendorf or with *Prometheus*) will depend on Koch’s reaction to them as individuals. A neutral or worse reaction will result in an interrogation lasting 1d+3 hours (involving threats on a poor or bad reaction, torture on a very bad or worse reaction). On a good or very good reaction, Koch will conduct a somewhat friendly questioning for one hour.

Make another reaction roll at the end of the interrogation. On a poor to good reaction, Koch will lock the PCs in an upstairs room after the interrogation, while he consults his superiors (this room will be monitored, and anything the PCs say will be recorded); he will also permit Schneider to administer any necessary medical care. On a bad or worse reaction, medical care will not be permitted; if the PC was unwounded before the interrogation, Koch will inflict some minor damage (such as a crippled off hand). Any PC who gets a very good or better reaction will be given some freedom to explore the compound with one of the Neanderthals as guards; only *Prometheus*, the vehicles, the basement and the outside will be off-limits.



If the PCs are confined to a room, they will be helped to escape if any of them get a good or better reaction from Schneider. If all of the PCs and *Prometheus* are inside Camp Mengele, the only thing preventing their escape is the deinonychus guarding *Prometheus*: the only weapon Schneider can give them is a monowire survival knife. If some of the PCs are still outside the camp, those inside will have to decide whether to abandon them (in the faint hope of being able to return to that time and place) or leave *Prometheus* and go hunting for them.

If Schneider releases the PCs, he will explain that all the weapons at Camp Mengele have transceivers built in, and the best way to send Koch off on a false trail is to stick the knife into a dinosaur going in the other direction. He will also give them a quick explanation of the security system at Camp Mengele, stressing that it won't be safe to return unless Koch is dead.

If Schneider doesn't (or can't) help the PCs, their best hope will be to enlist the aid of the Neanderthals. Sex Appeal and Gesture will be at -3 because of cultural differences, and Fast-Talk will only be possible if the fast-talker also makes a roll on German language skill.

When Koch discovers that the PCs have escaped, he and Ohlendorf will arm themselves, take an ATV and a male Neanderthal each (Koch will also take a deinonychus), and hunt them down. If none of the PCs are captured initially, Koch will examine *Prometheus* and begin a search for its owner(s), taking any captives to Camp Mengele for interrogation, etc., as above.

A Brother to Dragons

PCs not taken to Camp Mengele will have to get there under their own power, to recover *Prometheus* and possibly to rejoin the rest of the party.

The easiest way of finding the camp is to follow the

ATV tracks: Tracking+10, down to +5 after 24 hours, then -2 for every day that passes (see p. B57). For faster play, roll every hour instead of every five minutes; non-critical failure means an extra hour of searching. Camp Mengele is 60 miles from the herd by land. Roll 1d for every hour of travel; 1-2 is very bad terrain (or bad with rain), 3-5 bad, 6 average. The trip will probably take 3-4 days; survival rolls will be necessary, and encounters with dinosaurs and other creatures inevitable. Use any or all of the following incidents:

Boneheads: A dimwitted male Stegoceras mistakes a tall PC for a rival male, and charges at him. Only his head and legs can be targeted. Running away may result in the PC(s) being trampled.

Charge Code: The ATV tracks lead into the middle of a herd of browsing ceratopsians. The PCs have a choice of waiting for the herd to move on (1d-1 hours), or trying to walk around them without startling any (Contest of lowest Stealth skill vs. a collective sense roll of 14). This will be made more difficult when flying insects, disturbed by the herbivores, start biting the PCs; Will rolls will be needed to avoid crying out.

Raptor Pack: The group is followed by a pack of dromaeosaurs or other man-sized predators (two dinosaurs per PC). The dinosaurs are more curious than hungry, but after a few minutes (during which they may be detected by the PCs; contest of their Stealth vs. the PCs' senses), they will begin moving in to surround the adventurers, leaving only one exit. If the PCs run, the predators will chase the slowest; if the PCs hold their ground, the dinosaurs will lose interest and go after other prey. The pack will attack if the PCs wound any member, but flee if any of their number is killed.

A Mother to Dragons: The party passes by an abandoned nest as the eggs start hatching. A hatchling mistakes one of the PCs for his mother, and follows him everywhere, crying loudly when left behind. The hatchling may be anything from a hadrosaur to a Utahraptor or Tyrannosaurus.

Snack Attack: A dead or dying dinosaur attracts scavengers – first 1d-2 Quetzalcoatlus, then a pack of small carnosaurs, then 1d-3 large carnosaurs (Albertosaurus or Tyrannosaurus). The PCs will be near the bottom of the pecking order, and may be pecked very hard indeed. This scenario is very likely if the PCs kill or wound any large dinosaurs.

Do Not Disturb: While trying to hide from Koch, the PCs discover a cave with a small entrance. Unfortunately, the cave is easier to enter than to leave (though the thick layer of guano at the bottom should break anyone's fall), and there's a horde of irritable Sordes clinging to the ceiling.

PCs fleeing Koch should rejoin the rest of the party before meeting him. They should also encounter more dinosaurs: e.g. a herd of herbivores obscuring their tracks, or an alamosaur eating a tree in which a PC is trying to hide.

Ohlendorf should find at least some of the PCs before Koch does, and before they reach Camp Mengele – perhaps by blundering into a trap the party has set. Taking his weapons or his ATV will make it much easier for Koch to track them, but it will also make the inevitable fight less one-sided.

The climax of the adventure should be the battle with Koch and his trained deinonychus. If Koch is winning, have a hard-to-kill carnosaur come running towards him, drawing his fire. Once Koch is dead or incapacitated, the PCs can return to Camp Mengele and *Prometheus* safely; if they return to Camp Mengele while Koch is still alive, he and the surviving Neanderthals will be waiting in ambush.

Camp Mengele

Camp Mengele sits atop a gently sloping hill, and the ground for 10 yards around has been cleared of any plants more than 9 feet high. The camp is surrounded by a 30-foot high, 2-foot thick wall, topped by pestguards every six yards and a turret-mounted Gatling laser at each corner. The only gateway is 24 feet wide, but only 10 feet high – low enough to deter most large dinosaurs from entering if the gate is left open. The cleared area (including the dead-straight unpaved roadway down to the plain) is bioscanned; anything weighing more than 100 lbs. entering this area will be detected.

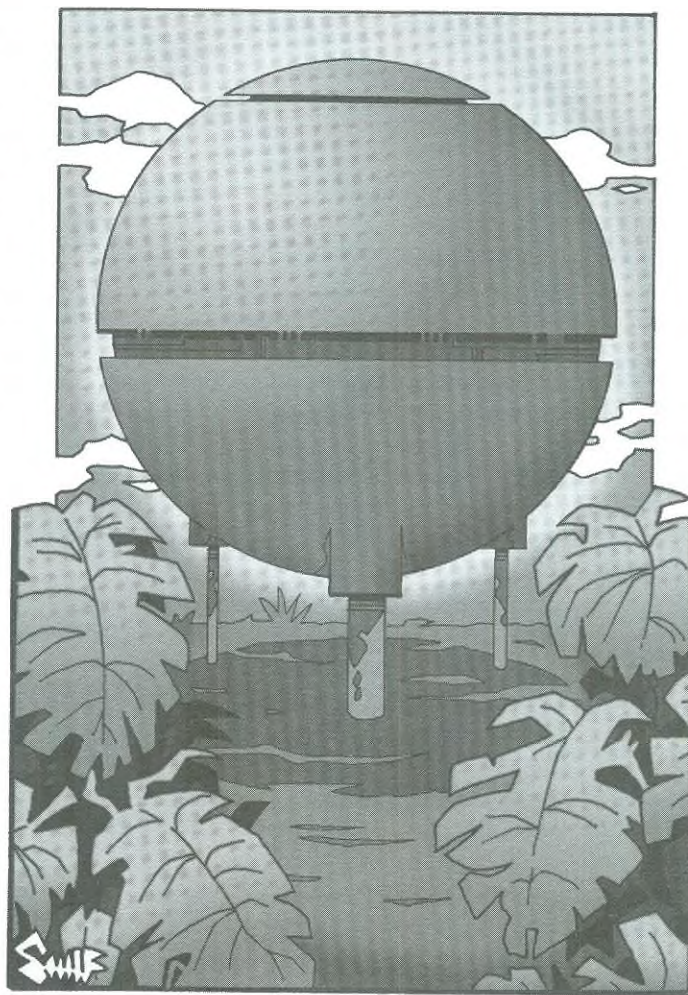
The pestguards (p. UT80) emit ultrasonic waves which repel insects and other IQ 1 creatures, and can be reset to induce terror in animals. At this higher setting, any animal with an IQ of 2 or less is repelled automatically; others must make a Will roll each (3 seconds \times IQ) to stay within 6 hexes of the sound (+1 for every 50 ST).

The Gatling lasers are controlled from the main building, and cannot be turned to fire at anything inside the compound. They do 20d impaling damage; SS 10; ACC 20; $\frac{1}{2}$ D 4000; Max 12,000; RoF 4; Rcl 0.

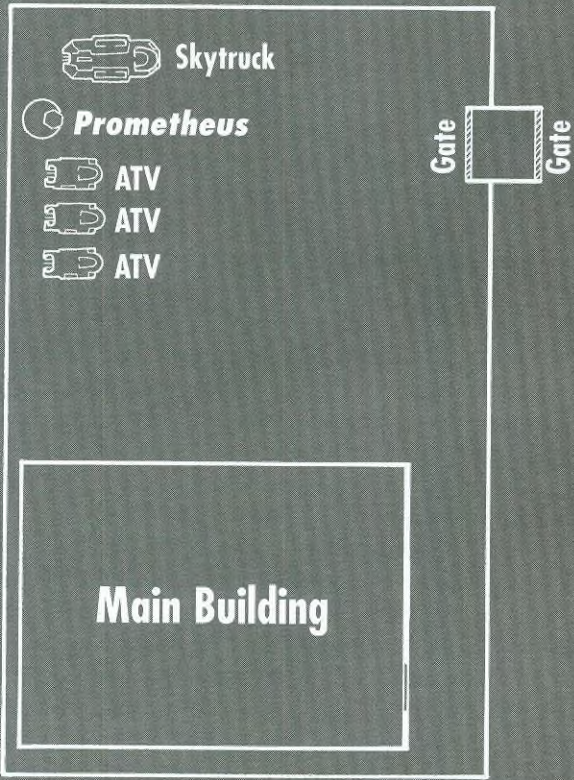
The computer-controlled security system is designed to cope with dinosaurs, not humans. If the PCs approach the walls on foot, the computer will merely reset the pestguards; only if they remain in the cleared area for more than three minutes will Koch be alerted.

The walls are DR 9, HT 400; the inch-thick doors slide down, guillotine-style, to close (5d crushing). The doors are transparent plasteel (DR 9, HT 60) with red diagonal stripes, and computer-controlled: the inner door will not open unless the outer is shut, and vice versa. Power comes from solar panels on the roof and power cells in the basement. The outer door will open automatically for an approaching ATV on autopilot, unless the base is on red alert.

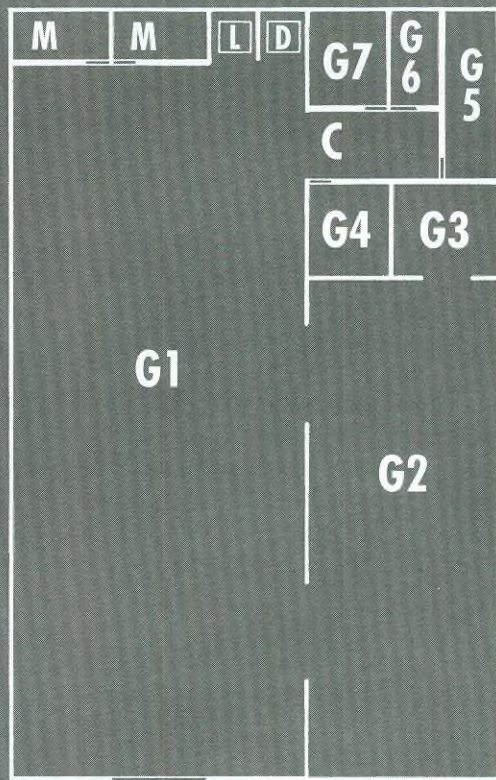
The compound contains the Skytruck, three ATVs, *Prometheus*, a rifle range, and some garden furniture.



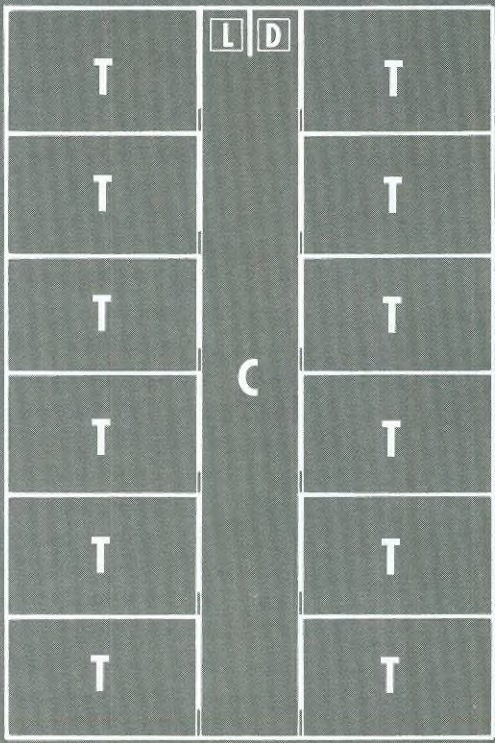
Compound



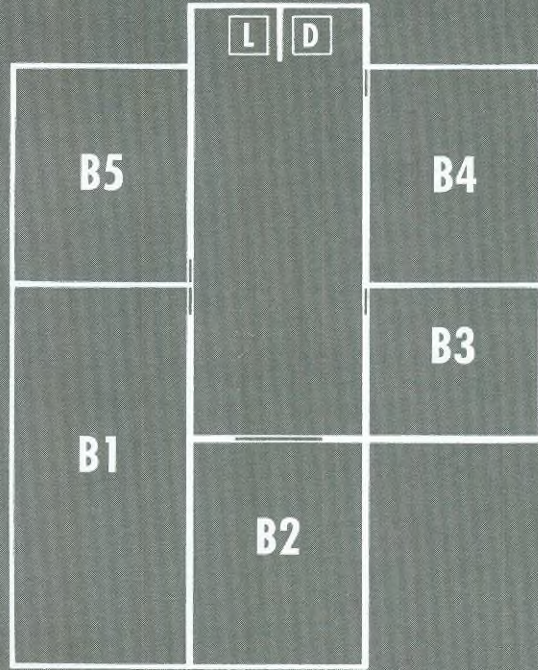
Ground Floor



Top Floor



Basement



Map Key:

- G1:** Foyer and bar. The walls are decorated with holographs of dinosaurs and the heads of Koch's kills (ceratopsians, carnosaurs, brontotheres, mammoths, sabertooths, and some obviously alien creatures). Most of the furniture is upholstered with leather or fur from extinct species (standard for ground floor and top floor). The bar is well-stocked with cocaine and some ultra-tech recreational drugs as well as alcohol. The bookshelf is packed with holographic promo magazines for Time Tours, which includes information on how the Reich flourished in the 20th century – invaluable for anyone who wishes to prevent this from happening.
- C:** Corridor. Walls decorated with more holographs and (smaller) animal heads.
- G2:** Restaurant. Similar decor to the foyer, but less well lit (-2 to vision).
- G3:** Kitchen. Largely automated, but it includes a workspace for Helga or anyone else who wishes to prepare their own food, with a drawer full of monowire-edged knives.
- G4:** Office. Contains a mini-computer desk and three chairs. The floor safe (security 3; see below) contains a Gauss needler, back-up disks, and Koch's most valued heirloom: a hardcover history of both world wars, signed by Hitler and Goering. Security 2.
- G5:** Koch's quarters. Contains a bed, a closet, a holocom, a bookshelf full of data discs, and assorted trophies. The closet contains a dinosaur laser, a military laser rifle, two exploration suits, two survival knives, a suit of reflex, an armory repair kit, and spare power cells and ammo for his weapons. Security 2.
- G6:** Armory. Contains more weapons than the PCs could ever need. Security 3.
- G7:** Schneider's quarters. Contains a bed, a closet, a bookshelf full of data discs (mostly medical and biology texts), a holocom, computer peripherals, and no trophies. The closet contains a dinosaur laser, an exploration suit, a survival knife, and a TL10 emergency medkit. Security 2.
- D:** Drop tube, roof to basement. Takes anything up to 1 ton down at 3 seconds per floor. PCs will have to make a DX roll to get off at the appropriate floor (floor is padded). Agoraphobes will have to make a Will roll to use, and a Fright check.
- L:** Lift tube, basement to roof. Takes anything up to 1 ton up at 4 seconds per floor. PCs will have to make a DX roll to get off at the appropriate floor (ceiling is padded).
- M:** Bathroom.
- B1:** Fusion reactor, and capacitors for the time portal. Security 3.
- B2:** Time Portal. Operating the portal should be a last resort; it is set for Koch's time, 240 years after the PCs left, and giving it new instructions requires

rolls on German at -4. Worse still, it runs on "oscillating time" and has elaborate safe-guards programmed in to prevent anyone visiting historic times. It can take the PCs to similar hunting lodges in the Pleistocene, Miocene, Eocene and the early Jurassic; there will be similar NPCs and technology to deal with, but it will give them the advantage of surprise. Security 3.

- B3:** Helga's room. The furniture consists of furs, a large soft bed, and a trunk full of Helga's clothes and possessions.
- B4:** Neanderthal "barracks." Contains four mattresses with sleeping furs, and four trunks full of clothes and survival equipment. The walls are decorated with holographs – headless shots of plump naked women taken from porno books, similar to Venus cult figures.
- B5:** Sick bay. Contains an automedic, a bed, and a locked cabinet full of TL10 medicine. Security 2.
- T:** Guest bedrooms. Each contains a large bed, a closet, and a holocom. The closet contains two exploration suits, plus any belongings of the guests. Security 1: these rooms can be locked from the outside to serve as (fairly comfortable) cells. Windows are DR 9, HT 20, and cannot be opened from inside.
- Security:** Security 1 rooms have voice-print scan-locks; doors are DR 6, HT 20. Security 2 rooms have genetic scan-locks; doors are DR 12, HT 40. Security 3 rooms have genetic scan-locks; doors are DR 16, HT 50.

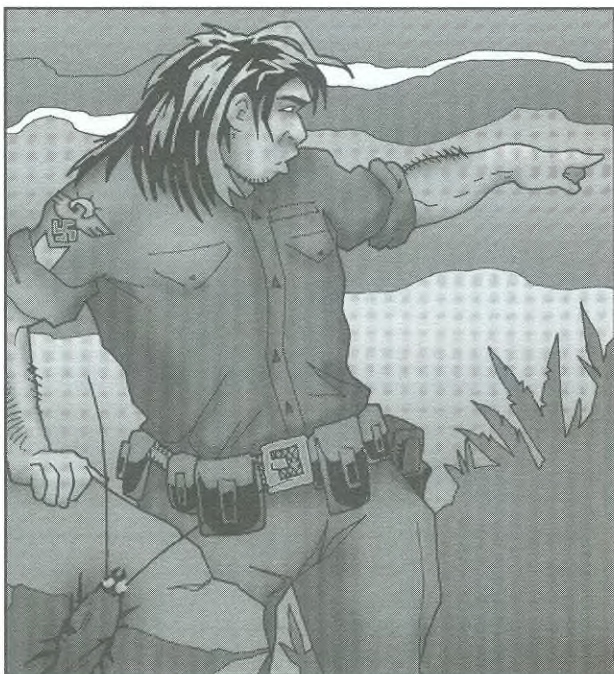
All rooms contain computer-controlled concealed holocameras: weapon fire in Security 1 or 2 rooms will start a recording and sound an alarm, and any movement in Security 3 rooms will be recorded.

Epilogue

Once they have defeated Koch, the PCs can return to Camp Mengele. Schneider will let them in, if he's alive and they contact him; if not, they will have to climb the walls or persuade the Neanderthals who've been left in charge of the camp. Schneider will also give the PCs any needed medical care before packing them back into *Prometheus*. He won't allow them to take any TL7+ weapons or equipment, but he will give them Koch's history book and some magazines, and tell them about the millions dying in the interstellar war the Reich is fighting with some of its former colonies. He will also warn them that the government has plans to escape into the past if the war reaches Earth, and breed a new human race from perfect Aryan stock, 63 million years before the first hominids . . .

If the PCs manage to smuggle (Contest of Holdout skill vs. Schneider's Vision rolls) any gadgets back to 1934, they will not be able to duplicate them at TL6: at best, a Gadgeteer will be able to recharge the power cells.

If Katz learns about Camp Mengele and the Reich, he will do his best to prevent any further time travel and try to swear the PCs to secrecy, for fear of the Nazis building or stealing a time machine. Katz will also try to change history to prevent a Nazi victory – even, if possible, prevent or minimize World War II and the holocaust. However, he draws the line at providing the allies with ultra-tech weapons. The PCs will receive their money, but not fame: any dinosaur eggs, hatchlings, photos, or samples that they've brought back will be given to a zoologist friend of Katz' with a large private lab (from which the dinosaurs will eventually escape, of course, but that's another story). Katz will die less than a year later, bequeathing *Prometheus* and the control room to the PC to whom he had the best reaction.



Alternatively, Koch's successor may override the safeguards on the time portal, and come to 1934 hunting the PCs armed with ultra-tech weapons and trained dinosaurs: he might also try to change the course of history to ensure a Nazi victory by influencing German science, politics, or military intelligence.

If the Reich changes the course of evolution, the PCs may return to a very different world, indeed.

Adapting for Other Genres

"Time of the Tyrants" assumes that the PCs, if they return to their own time alive, will be able to change the future for the better. In the case of *Cliffhangers* PCs, this means preventing a Nazi victory. In an *Atomic Horror* adventure, the PCs may have to track down surviving Nazi masterminds in South America (or, if you prefer Russian villains, prevent Beria from succeeding Stalin). For any GM who wants to adapt the adventure for present-day or Cyberpunk PCs, genocidally-inclined organizations and politicians may be found in any newspaper.

David Katz

Age 58; dark brown hair and beard turning grey; blue eyes; 5'7", 155 lbs.

ST 8 DX 12 IQ 16 HT 9 Move 1

Advantages: Gadgeteer; Intuition; Mathematical Ability; Wealth (Comfortable)

Disadvantages: Lame (Legless); Lecherousness; Overconfidence; Pacifism (total); Stubborn; Unattractive.

Reputation: +2 to scientists and economists (genius, always recognized); -1 to general public (pacifist, extreme liberal, etc.; rarely recognized); -2 to conservatives (rarely recognized).

Quirks: Vegetarian; Incompetence, Diplomacy (maximum skill 6); Loves monster movies.

Skills: Accounting-16; Anthropology-16; Archaeology-17; Astronomy/TL6-19; Bard-15; Chemistry/TL6-14; Cooking-15; Detect Lies-14; Economics-15; Electronics (Sensors)-18; Fast Talk-15; First Aid/TL6-11; History-14; Linguistics-15; Literature-14; Mathematics-20; Merchant-17; Meteorology/TL6-15; Occultism-15; Physics-18; Research-18; Savoir-Faire-15; Scrounging-17; Streetwise-14; Theology-16; Zoology-14.

Languages: Danish-17, English-17, German-15, Greek-15, Hebrew-15.

Katz, a Danish Jew who emigrated to the United States with his family in 1913, lost the use of his legs after a fall from the top of Yerkes Observatory. He is best known in scientific circles for his work on optical telescopes and camera lenses, in financial and mathematical circles for having predicted (and survived) the Wall Street crash, and in political and religious circles for his outspoken pacifism, left-wing sympathies, and disregard for conventional morality.

Graf Horst Ohlendorf

Age 44; Fair skin, red-blond hair, blue eyes; 6'1", 208 lbs.

ST 12 DX 10 IQ 10 HT 11

Speed 5.25 Move 3

Advantages: Status +4; Wealth (Wealthy)

Disadvantages: Bad Temper; Bloodlust; Bully; Gluttony; Overconfidence; Overweight; Stubbornness; Xenophobia.

Skills: Administration-11; Area Knowledge (Reich)-13; Beam Weapons/TL10 (Laser)-14; Brawling-12; Carousing-14; Diplomacy-10; Driving/TL10 (ATV)-11; First Aid/TL10-9; Fishing-11; Guns/TL10 (Needler)-13; Hobby (Heraldry)-11; Knife-12; Leadership-11; Naturalist-9; Politics-12; Savoir-Faire-14; Stealth-9; Survival (Forest)-9; Swimming-9; Tracking-11.

Languages: German-10.

Equipment: Dinosaur Laser; Monowire survival knife; Gauss Needler; Exploration suit; Televiwer; Wrist Computer.

Quirks: Collects weapons and hunting trophies; Distrusts women, especially his wife, and prefers to avoid them.

Ohlendorf spends most of his time mismanaging a vacc suit factory in 23rd-century St. Petersburg that he inherited from his father. During his visits to Camp

Mengele, he loves playing the role of the Great White Hunter, and is patronizing (but generous) to everyone except Koch.

Gunther

Neanderthal, early 20s, tanned skin, blond hair, brown eyes, powerfully built; 5'11", 180 lbs.

ST 13 DX 11 IQ 10 HT 13

Speed 6 Move 6

Advantages: Alertness +2; Combat Reflexes; Toughness (DR 1); Strong Will +2.

Disadvantages: Duty (Camp Mengele, 15 or less); Illiteracy; Manaphobia; Sense of Duty (Neanderthals); Unattractive (to modern humans; attractive to Neanderthals).

Quirks: Loves driving, hates flying; Always carries a weapon he's made himself; Homesick.

Skills: Animal Handling-12; Beam Weapon (Laser)-14; Bow and Palette-12; Club-13; Driving/TL10 (ATV)-13; Gesture-11; Guns (Needler)-13; Knife-13; Spear-14; Spear Throwing-15; Stealth-11; Stone Knapping-13; Survival (Forest)-14; Tracking-14.

Languages: German-9, Tribal-10.

Equipment: Dinosaur Laser; Monowire survival knife; Gauss Needler; Stone Knife; Exploration suit; Neanderthal jewelry.

Gunther was one of the best hunters in his tribe until "rescued" by Koch while they were both hunting the same mammoth. He has been working as a guide at Camp Mengele for five years, under the impression that it's some type of afterlife, and has a working knowledge of TL10 equipment but no real understanding of it. In most ways, he still thinks like a Neanderthal hunter, and a PC with a firm grounding in anthropology and psychology may be able to turn him against Ohlendorf.

Wolfgang Koch

Tanned; receding ash blond hair, blue eyes; 6'3", 170 lbs.

ST 14 DX 13 IQ 12 HT 13 Basic Speed 6

Advantages: Absolute Direction; Acute Vision +2; Appearance (Handsome); Combat Reflexes; Fearlessness +2; High Pain Threshold; Military Rank 5; Night Vision; Strong Will +2.

Disadvantages: Bad Temper; Bloodlust; Intolerance; Sense of Duty (Reich).

Skills: Armory/TL10 (Beam Weapons)-12; Beam Weapons/TL10 (Laser)-17; Brawling-14; Camouflage-12; Carousing-15; Climbing-12; Cooking-12; Detect Lies-12; Driving (ATV)-13; Fast-Talk-12; First Aid/TL10-13; Fishing-13; Gesture-12; Guns/TL10 (Needler)-16; Holdout-13; Intelligence Analysis-11; Interrogation-13; Intimidation-14; Knife-14; Leadership-14; Judo-13; Mechanic/TL10 (ATV)-12; Naturalist-12; Navigation/TL10-13; Savoir-Faire-11; Scrounging-11; Speed-Load (Power Cell)-13; Stealth-13; Streetwise-10; Survival (Plains)-14, (other)-11; Swimming-12; Tracking-14; Traps/TL10-11.

Languages: German-12, Tribal-10.

Equipment: Military Dinosaur Laser; Military X-ray laser rifle; Gauss Needler; Monowire survival knife; Exploration suit; Televiewer; Wrist Computer.

Quirks: Loves hunting and war; Hates wearing a helmet; Megalomaniac and bully (only when drunk); Collects trophies.

Wolfgang Koch is a former SS colonel demoted and "banished" to the Cretaceous after sending his daughter's lover on a suicide mission. He treats his "banishment" as a holiday, and enjoys hobnobbing with the wealthy and powerful who come to Camp Mengele. He detests Schneider, and usually ignores him.

Dr. Hans Schneider

Pale; wavy dark blond hair, blue eyes; 5'10", 150 lbs.

ST 11 DX 12 IQ 14 HT 11

Basic Speed 5.75 Move 5

Advantages: Danger Sense; Empathy; Immunity to Disease; Language Talent +1; Rapid Healing.

Disadvantages: Code of Honor (Hippocratic Oath); Low Pain Threshold; Pacifism (Cannot Kill).

Quirks: Xenophile – loves strange places and people (especially women).

Skills: Anthropology-13; Beam Weapons/TL10 (Laser)-13; Botany-13; Ecology-13; Guns/TL10 (Needler)-13; Detect Lies-14; Diplomacy-13; Fast-Talk-13; Genetics-14; History-14; Linguistics-12; Physician/TL10-16; Piloting (Vertol)-13; Savoir-Faire-14; Sex Appeal-13; Stealth-13; Streetwise-13; Surgery-15; Survival (Woodlands)-13; Zoology-15.

Languages: German-17, English-15, French-15, Russian-15, Spanish-15.

Schneider was banished to Camp Mengele after his C.O. was executed for giving medical care to the enemy; Schneider was suspected (and guilty) of complicity, but nothing was ever proven. He hates all SS officers, especially Koch, and while he cannot bring himself to kill him, he would let him walk into an ambush or trap if the PCs set one up.

Helga

Neanderthal, late teens, pale skin, platinum-blond hair, green eyes, skinny; 5'3", 83 lbs.

ST 10 DX 11 IQ 12 HT 9

Speed 5 Move 5

Disadvantages: Duty (Camp Mengele, 15 or less); Illiteracy; Laziness; Skinny; Unattractive (to modern humans; ugly to Neanderthals).

Quirks: Manipulative.

Skills: Animal Handling-12; Bow and Palette-12; Cooking-14; Disguise (Animal Guise)-10; Fast-Talk-13; Gesture-12; Herbalist-13; Knife-13; Mimicry (Animal Sounds)-13, (Human Voices)-11; Naturalist-12; Sex-Appeal-8; Stealth-13; Stone Knapping-12; Sleight of Hand-12; Survival (Forest)-13; Theology (Rituals and Ceremonies)-13; Tracking-12.

Languages: German-10, Tribal-11.

Equipment: Small monowire knife; Dress (no PD or DR); Neanderthal jewelry.

Helga is a shaman's daughter from a tribe near Gunther's. Koch kidnapped her because she was, by his standards, the most attractive Neanderthal woman he'd seen – petite (apart from large breasts), long-legged, and fair. To Neanderthal males, however, she is unappealingly scrawny and pale. Helga is aware of this, but she also knows that she's the only Neanderthal woman the males are ever likely to see again, and enjoys playing the four against each other.

Helga's tribal language defaults to the others at -2, and vice versa.

Fritz, Klaus, and Helmut

Neanderthals, late teens, tanned skin, blond hair, brown eyes, powerfully built.

ST 14 DX 10 IQ 9 HT 12

Speed 5.75 Move 5

Advantages: Alertness +2; Toughness (DR 1).

Disadvantages: Duty (Camp Mengele, 15 or less); Illiteracy; Manaphobia; Sense of Duty (each other); Unattractive (to modern humans). Fritz has Overconfidence; Klaus, Impulsiveness; and Helmut, Gullibility.

Skills: Animal Handling-11; Beam Weapon (Laser)-13; Bow and Palette-10; Club -13; Driving/TL10 (ATV)-13; Gesture-11; Guns (Needler) -12; Knife-13; Spear-13; Spear Throwing-13; Stealth -11; Stone Knapping -12; Survival (Forest)-14; Tracking-13.

Languages: German-9, Tribal-10.

Equipment: Dinosaur Laser; Monowire survival knife; Gauss Needler; Exploration suit.

Like Gunther, these are Neanderthal hunters kidnapped by Koch. Being younger and less perceptive than Gunther, they are more easily intimidated (by Koch), manipulated (by Helga), or tricked (by Schneider or the PCs). Klaus and Fritz are brothers; Helmut, Helga's favorite, comes from the same region, but several centuries earlier.

ATV

This is a TL9/10 electric smartcar with off-road suspension. It has two roomy front seats with crashwebs, and two light rear seats which can fold to provide another 60 cubic

feet and 300 lbs. of cargo capacity (total 872 lbs. and 76 cf). It is fitted with a midget computer, crashwebs (front seats only), communicator (1,000-mile range), and a convertible hardtop with solar panels. It can run for 11.4 hours on battery power, at a top speed of 120 mph. The solar panels can recharge an hour's power use in 21.3 hours, or enable it to crawl along at 15 mph. Its armor gives it PD 4, DR 10.

The ATV's computer can drive the car, and respond to commands in German. It will ignore most orders in unfamiliar voices, but will always obey "Stop!" or "Home." The manual controls are simple: only -2 unfamiliarity penalty for any PC used to jeeps or ATVs.

Skytruck

This is a TL10/11 armored vertol fitted with a TL11 heavy tractor beam. It has eight seats and a 130 cf cargo bay, and is propelled by reactionless thrusters powered by a 2 MW fusion reactor. It is fitted with a midget computer, crashwebs (front seats only), communicator (1,000-mile range), and a multiscanner (5000-yard range). Its armor gives it PD 6, DR 50. It can travel at 420 mph with no cargo and the tractor off, 324 mph while carrying the un-aerodynamic *Prometheus*, or 283 mph with maximum load (a ten-ton dinosaur). The controls are very complex: -5 to Pilot (Helicopter) skill for a TL7 character, -7 to Pilot (Autogyro or Airship) for TL6.

Equipment

Military Dinosaur Laser: Damage 26d Imp.; SS 16; Acc 12; 1/2D 4,000; Max 12,000; Wt 10; RoF 1/2; Shots 10/D; ST -; Rcl 0.

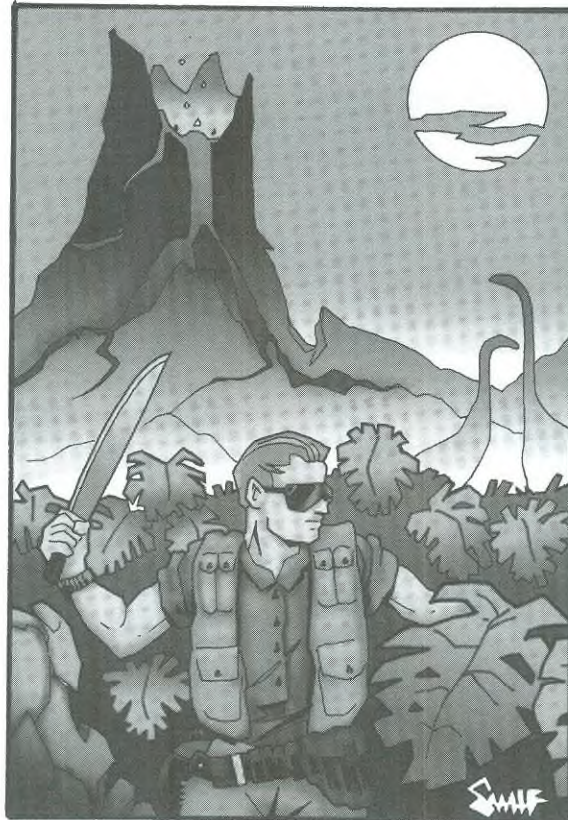
Military X-Ray Laser rifle: Damage 3d Imp.; SS 15; Acc 15; 1/2D 500; Max 2,000; Wt 9; RoF 8; Shots 140/D; ST -; Rcl 0.

Dinosaur Laser: Damage 26d Imp.; SS 16; Acc 12; 1/2D 4,000; Max 12,000; Wt 9; RoF 1/2; Shots 2C/2C; ST -; Rcl 0.

Monowire survival knife: (p. UT58): thr+2 imp, sw+1d cut (max 2d+2). Any armor protects against cutting attacks with only half its normal DR. Hollow hilt contains an inertial compass and miniaturized TL10 survival equipment (GM's choice).

Exploration suit: (p. UT81): PD 2, DR 5. Can be sealed against contamination or pollutants; camouflage pattern can be reset manually (5 seconds). 8 lbs.

Televiwer: (p. UT33): Electronic binoculars, adjustable from 5x to 50x; includes IR, and a range finder accurate to 5,000 yards. 1/2 lb.



Trespasser's Isle

*An Adventure for
GURPS Horror
by Graeme Davis*

To run this adventure, you'll need the *GURPS Basic Set* and *GURPS Horror*. *GURPS Magic* and *Bestiary* might also be useful. With a little work on the part of the GM, it can be run as a *GURPS Horror* adventure in any time period, or a horror adventure in a fantasy setting such as *GURPS Conan* (where it would be best set somewhere off the coasts of either the Black Kingdoms or Vendhya) or *GURPS Fantasy*. It could also be used in a historical campaign with a fantastic tone, anywhere in tropical waters.

Introduction

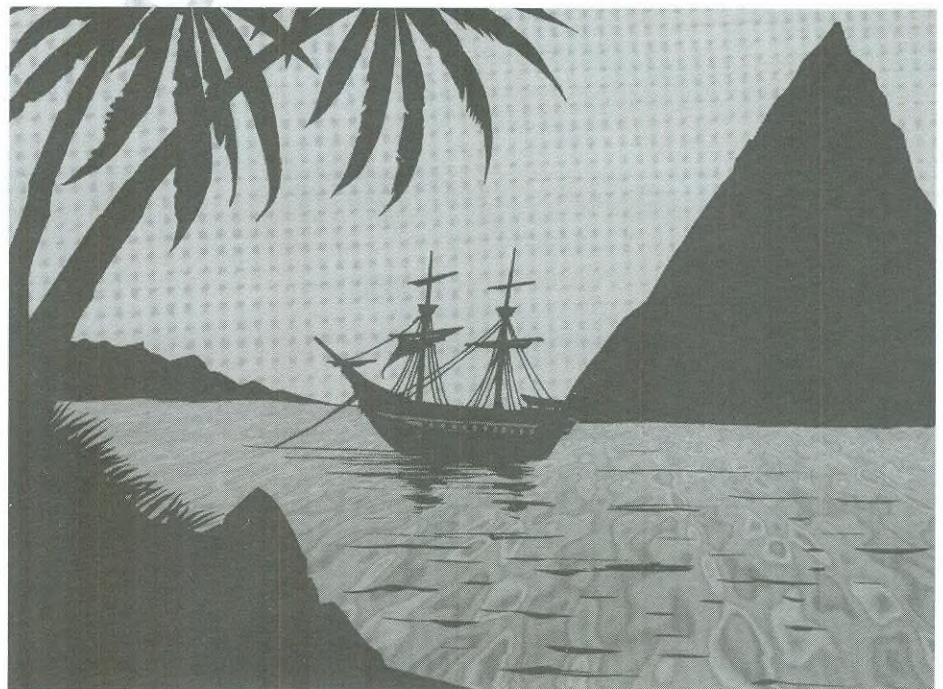
The adventure begins with the characters on a sea voyage, in a tropical area. They are blown by a storm to an uncharted island; a Polynesian island would work well, but the island could just as well be somewhere in the less-explored reaches of the Caribbean or the Indian Ocean. They find the remains of a ship that was blown there many years before, and meet the ancient evil that destroyed its crew – the last priest of a fantastic temple, now a hideous undead creature devoted to destroying all who trespass on the island.

The GM is advised to read through this adventure carefully before attempting to run it. It is not written in a sequential order, because events will depend very much on the PCs' actions. The first few sections, *The Storm*, *The Island*, *The Eliza* and *The Temple*, cover the journey to the island and the things they can find there; the final section, *The Guardian*,

describes the island's lone inhabitant, and how it will react to the presence of trespassers. The adventure consists almost entirely of the Guardian's actions and the PCs' reactions, so the GM should read this section carefully and be prepared to make all the Guardian's tactical decisions on the fly, in response to whatever the adventurers do.

The Storm

The group's ship is caught in a terrible storm, and driven before the wind for two days and two nights. The sky is too dark and overcast to tell the time of day, and neither sun nor stars can be seen until the storm abates on the third morning.



A storm at sea can be a terrifying experience. In addition to the considerable damage to the ship (according to p. SW104, 1d×10% damage to all ship systems), crewmen are also very much at risk.

Huge waves can wash the strongest mariner overboard, while breaking masts and falling tackle are another hazard, and one by no means restricted to the age of sail.

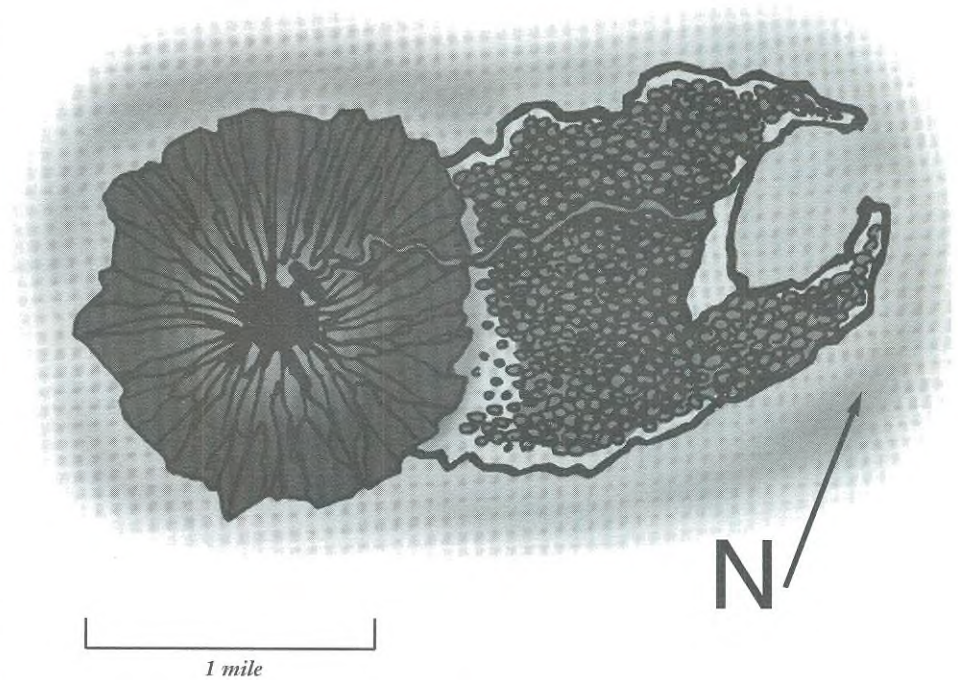
A wooden pulley-block from a sailing ship could weigh several pounds, and one falling from any height could maim or kill; swinging booms and snapping cables were common shipboard hazards right up to the mid-20th century.

The GM must decide how to handle the storm. It could be played out in its full, terrifying majesty, or reduced to a couple of dice rolls for NPC losses and Character injury, or simply referred to as an event in the past, with the adventure starting once the storm abates and the characters can pay attention to where they are.

If the GM wishes to use dice rolls to determine PC injuries from the storm, each character should make a survival roll, using this method adapted from the *GURPS* mass combat rules. Take the average of a character's DX score and Seamanship skill, rounding down. Advantages like Alertness and Combat Reflexes will help characters foresee and avoid some of the dangers, and modify the roll as normal. Then consult the following table:

Modified DX/Seamanship	Roll Result
Made by 5 or more	Unhurt
Made by 1-4	1 hit damage
Made exactly	2 hits damage
Missed by 1-2	1d+1 damage
Missed by 3-4	2 wounds, each 1d damage
Missed by 5-6	2 wounds, each 2d damage
Missed by 7+ or critical failure	3 wounds, each 2d damage

The third morning sees the heroes washed up on the shores of a small island, which does not appear on any of the ship's charts. By some miracle, the crippled ship sails right through a gap in the reef which surrounds a calm, clear lagoon on one side of the island, and beaches itself in soft, black volcanic sand. It needs repairs, and the radio, if any, is smashed. The storm is on the wane, and within a few hours the sky is clear and the winds calm. As the PCs and their fellow voyagers take stock of their new



surroundings, they notice another vessel in the lagoon. It is an old hulk, apparently abandoned and rotting at anchor.

The Island

The island on which the castaways find themselves is dominated by a volcano at one end. It slopes steeply down to the sea on three sides, but on the fourth a more gentle slope supports dense jungle, running down to the sandy lagoon where the two vessels are sheltered.

The lagoon itself is broad and shallow, fringed by coral reefs and a wide beach of black volcanic sand. A little way behind the beach is a small clearing, now largely reclaimed by the forest, in which a few makeshift wooden crosses mark a dozen or so graves. Many of the graves seem to have been dug open some time ago, though there are no disturbed bones or other remains in the clearing.

The forest is extremely dense, and harbors several species of dangerous wildlife. Use the following encounter table when PCs are about in the forest, rolling once for every half hour of exploration:

2D roll	Encounter
2-5	No encounter
6	Snake
7-8	Poisonous spider
9-11	Poisonous plant
12	Track (encountered only once, no encounter thereafter)

The GM should use discretion when rolling encounters; ideally, the track should be discovered after 2-3 hours of searching.

Snake encounters are with a single poisonous snake; treat as a rattlesnake (p. B143) for game stats. Snakes will



glide away into the forest unless surprised, cornered, or controlled by the Guardian; a random encounter assumes that the snake is at bay, and will rear warningly, attacking in response to any sudden move.

Poisonous spider encounters are with a single spider, which drops out of a tree onto a randomly-selected victim or climbs up an arm or leg. The spider is 3-4 inches across, and has 1 point in every stat. Its bite cannot penetrate anything thicker than light cloth, and does no damage in itself. However, it is venomous: treat its venom as caustic tar (p. B132).

Poisonous plant encounters are at the GM's discretion. The plant could be a densely-growing vine whose sap acts just like caustic tar, or it could be something from *GURPS Fantasy Bestiary*, such as Bloodvine, Drop Weed, Puff Weed or Tangle Weed.

Track encounters are with the trail used by the Guardian to travel between the lagoon and the temple. A successful Tracking roll is necessary to spot the trail. Once the trail has been discovered, any further track encounters rolled are treated as no encounter.

The Eliza

A small sailing ship of 17th-century design, the hulk looks as though it has been anchored in the lagoon for many years. Algae has begun to climb up the anchor-cable from water level, and the timbers are cracked and spotted with mold. In a campaign set before the mid-19th century, a successful Seamanship roll will reveal that the hulk is in a worse state than the PCs' vessel, though it might be used as a source of materials for repairs.

Hailing the ship will bring no response; she can be boarded from a boat drawn alongside, or characters can swim out to her and climb the anchor cable. The open window of the captain's cabin can be seen from the water if anyone rows or swims around the aft end of the ship.

Main Deck and Poop Deck

The decks are clear, apart from occasional patches of mold. There is not even the normal clutter that might be expected aboard a working ship. The ship's cockboat is intact, apart from a large hole in the bottom. Characters looking down over the ship's stern from the poop deck will notice that the window to the captain's cabin has been broken, and hangs almost off its hinges.

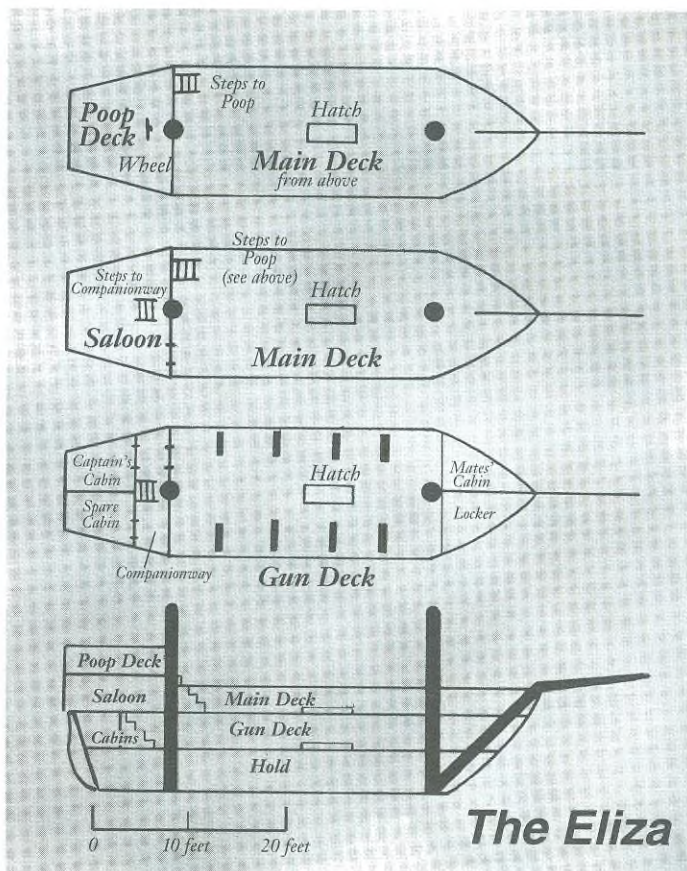
Saloon

The door from the main deck to the saloon is bolted on the inside, but can be broken down. It has DR 2 and 15 hit points. The saloon is deserted. Its furnishings are still in good condition, apart from the occasional spot of mold. A cutlass locker at the rear of the

the saloon stands empty. A stairway leads down to the companionway.

Companionway

This area is completely deserted. A stairway leads up to the saloon, and doors lead out to the gun-deck and the two aft cabins. The door to the gun-deck shows signs of having been torn off its hinges; the door to the spare cabin is closed but unlocked.



The Eliza

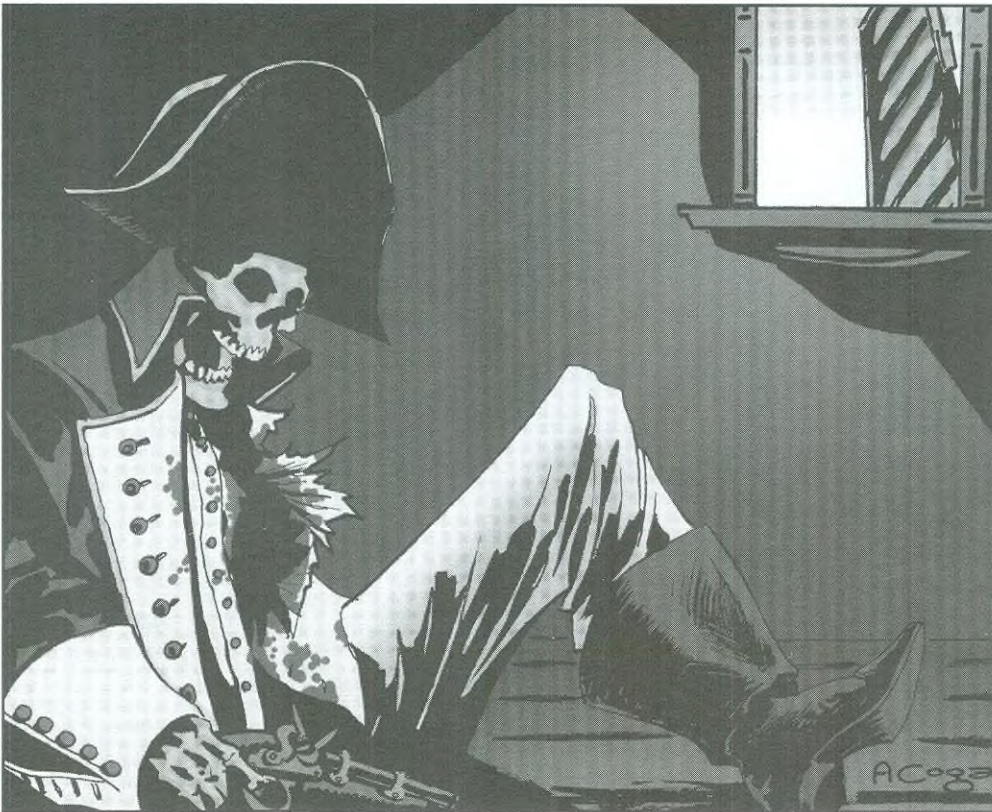
The door to the captain's cabin is bolted on the inside and barricaded with furniture; it counts as having DR 6 and 120 hit points. Anyone who saw the open window from the poop deck but still persists in trying to batter the door down may be permitted an IQ roll to work out that the open window probably belongs to this cabin, and may offer an easier way in.

Captain's Cabin

The cabin is furnished with a bunk and a desk. Beneath the open window at the rear of the cabin sprawls a withered corpse, with a pistol in one hand and a large, ragged hole in its chest (a Fright Check would be appropriate here). A successful Surgery skill roll will establish that the heart is missing, apparently torn from the captain's body by some powerful animal, possibly prompting an additional Fright Check.

Under the bunk is an iron strongbox, which is lightly coated with rust but still sound. The key is in the captain's waistcoat pocket, but the lock can be picked or the box can be forced open. It has DR 6, and 15 hit points will be enough to break it open; 30 will destroy it completely, and severely damage the ship's log. In this event, the GM might like to tear the log into tiny pieces, and make the players try to fit it back together. In addition to the ship's log, the chest contains two small sacks of silver (GM's discretion on their value, probably not more than \$1,000), representing the ship's paychest for the voyage.

A wooden sea-chest stands at the foot of the bunk. It is not locked, and contains the captain's spare clothes and a few other personal effects of no value. The style of the clothes confirms the impression that the ship has been lying here for many years.



The Log

According to the log, the *Eliza* set sail from Falmouth in 1643. The last few entries, relating to the island, read as follows:

March 17th. The storm abated on the third day. Land sighted to larboard. Put in for repairs and fresh victuals.

March 18th. Fixed the stars by night. We lie in uncharted waters, but are hopeful of finding our course. A foraging party sent forth at first light, and needful repairs made to the ship. The foraging party did not return by nightfall.

The same night. Attacked by night. Twelve lost. Some talk of the foraging party. Crew grows restless. Resolved to set forth at first light, though I am loth to abandon our foragers for the sake of wild talk.

The same night, later. We have suffered a further attack. God grant my eyes lied.

March 19th. Four of us remain, and are too few to crew the ship. The cockboat is holed. I have set the others to build a raft, but we are surely trapped in this infernal place.

The same night. All are now dead. I hear them on deck. I am in God's hands.

Spare Cabin

This cabin is similarly furnished to the captain's cabin, but appears not to have been used.

Mates' Cabin

This cabin contains three bunks and three sea chests. It seems to have been the scene of a struggle; the furnishings are broken and clothes and other debris are scattered throughout the cabin and onto the gun deck. There are extensive bloodstains on the walls, floor and bedding, now brown with age.

Locker

This cabin was evidently used as a storeroom. The rope and canvas here is mostly in good condition, and might be used to repair the PCs' ship in an age-of-sail adventure.

Gun Deck

The guns and tackle are so thoroughly rotted and rusted as to be completely useless without major repairs. There are several kegs of powder on the gun deck, all soaked and useless. At the GM's option, a character with the advantage of Extraordinary Luck might find a usable keg of powder (or, more likely, a small amount of dry powder at the heart of a keg where the damp has not yet penetrated), if some time is spent specifically looking for it.

Hold

The hold is hip-deep in water, which has completely spoiled the few kegs and boxes of supplies that are stored there. Some float on the surface of the water, while others lie on the bottom out of sight, and could be hazardous to clumsy searchers or to anyone not moving cautiously.

The Temple

The track winds through the jungle and climbs around the volcano at the far end of the island. The mountainside is steep and precipitous, and progress off the track will be difficult. The track opens out into a broad rock-hewn platform in front of the temple.

Like the platform in front of it, the temple is hewn out of the black rock of the volcano's side. The many pillars of the facade are weirdly carved with fantastic designs, and beyond them all is darkness.

Outer Chamber

This artificial cavern serves as an antechamber to the temple. Its ceiling, lost to sight in the darkness, is now home to several thousand small bats – a fact borne out by the deep layer of guano on the floor, which adds +1 to the cost of all movement and imposes a -2 penalty to all attacks (p. B107). Any sudden flare of light or loud noise will panic the bats, and they will fill the cavern for 5 minutes, tripling all movement and hand-to-hand attack penalties and making missile fire impossible. One or two torches will not be bright enough to panic the bats, but any bright light will be; talking will not panic the bats, but gunshots will.

A cruel GM might note that the guano on the floor of bat caves is normally home to a wide range of snakes, rats, bugs, and spiders, which live on the guano itself, each other, and any sick or dying bat which drops down from the roof. The smell is overpowering, and the sight of so many unsavory creatures crawling, scuttling and slithering around might impose a serious penalty on Fright Checks for anyone with an appropriate phobia, quite apart from being highly unsanitary. The whole chamber counts as an infected area (p. B134).

Treasure Chambers

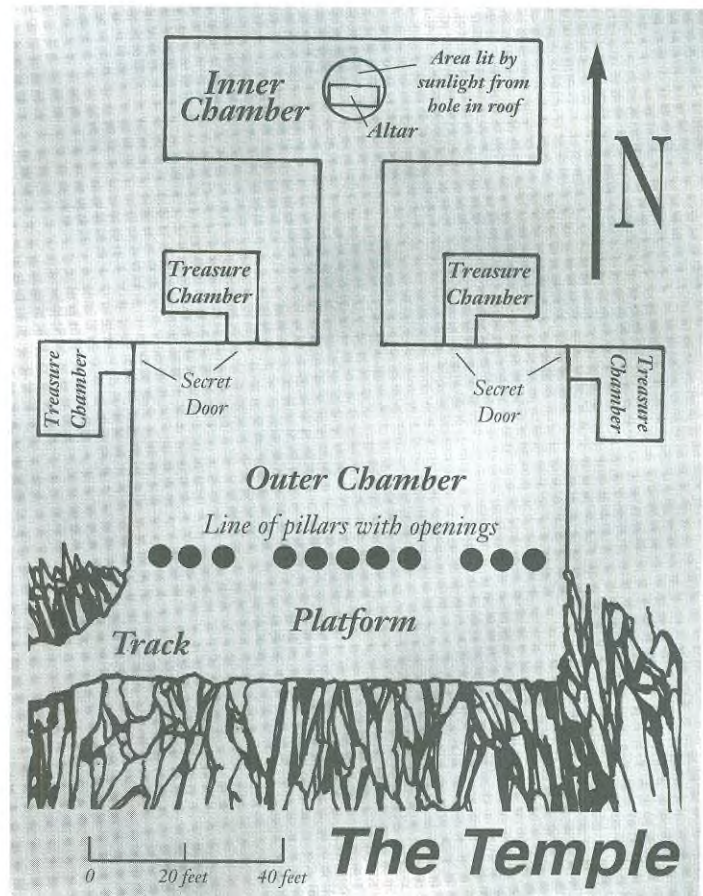
These chambers contain treasures offered up at the temple while it was still in use. Each chamber is sealed by a stone door, fantastically carved and massive but cunningly counterbalanced. Up to four people may

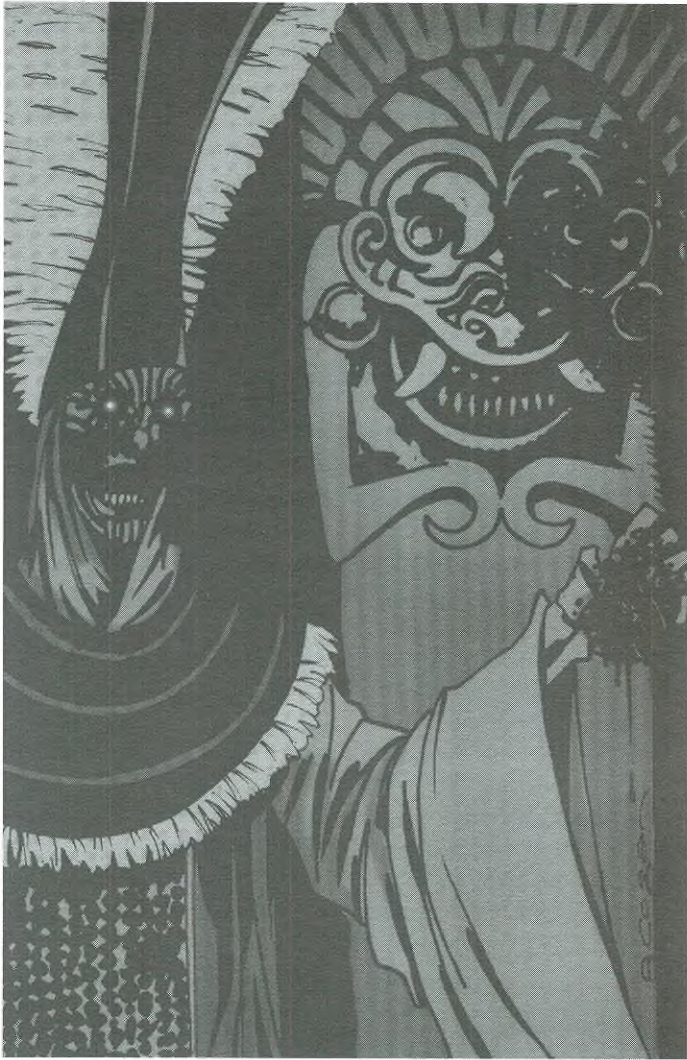
cooperate in trying to open a door – make a success roll vs. (total ST/4).

Each door is fitted with a trap, which fires a spread of four sharpened-bamboo darts across the doorway from a hidden mechanism. The traps are cunningly hidden among the carvings on the doors, requiring a successful roll of Traps-4 to spot them; the penalty does not apply after the first trap has been discovered, and the traps can easily be neutralized by blocking the holes from which the darts fire.

The traps are old, and may not fire; each dart fires only on a 8 or less on three dice. Cruel GMs might like to roll a chance of a malfunctioned trap firing late, each time an intruder crosses the threshold (this should be a low chance at best: 6 or less on three dice). Each dart hits on a 9 or less, striking a randomly-determined intruder in the doorway, and they are too small and fast-moving to be dodged. The darts cause 1d-2 damage in themselves; they were once coated with a poisonous resin, which has dried out over the centuries. Each dart that causes damage has a small (6 or less on three dice) chance of having some effective venom left, which will have the same effects as caustic tar (p. B132).

Inside the treasure chambers are great heaps of offerings. Not all may be valuable in the players' eyes: many offerings consist of brightly-colored feathers, items of carved wood and worked shell, ritually-sacrificed small animals, and so on. If the explorers decide to ransack the treasure chambers thoroughly, each will be able to find objects with a total value of \$1d×IQ.





Inner Chamber

The inner chamber and the broad passage which leads to it are lined with a succession of shallow niches, each containing a dried and withered corpse – the remains of generations of priests who have served the temple. Some are still intact, preserved by the unusually dry air in the temple complex, and stand up in their niches, secured with bark rope and propped up on elaborately-carved war clubs. Others have crumbled into small piles of dust and bones. Strangely, the bugs and rats from the outer chamber seem never to have disturbed these corpses, and the GM might like to impose Fright Checks at this discovery.

A stone altar stands in the middle of the inner chamber, carved with the same fantastic designs as the doors to the treasure chambers. Directly above the altar, high in the chamber's ceiling, a small aperture allows a thin beam of sunlight into the chamber. On the altar are several objects which will be recognized as human hearts on a successful Surgery skill roll. Most are dried and leathery, having come from the crew of the *Eliza*; however, if the Guardian has killed any of the PCs' group, there will be an appropriate number of fresh, moist hearts upon the altar, and more Fright Checks may be required as the significance of this sinks in.

If the Guardian has not already been destroyed, it will be hiding in this chamber when the PCs enter. It is identical to the other well-preserved priestly corpses, and is indistinguishable from them unless it moves.

The Guardian

The Guardian is the last priest of the long-dead cult which carved the temple out of the rock of the volcano and conducted their terrible rituals there. He – or rather, it – continues to serve the temple after death.

ST: 16	Move/Dodge: 5/5	Size: 1
DX: 10	PD/DR: 1/1	Weight: 120 lbs.
IQ: 18	Damage: 1d+1 cr	
HT: 15	Reach: C	

Advantages and Disadvantages

Because of its unnatural state of existence and its dry, leathery skin, the Guardian takes only 1 point of damage from any impaling attack and from any ball-type firearm such as a musket or pistol. A shot-firing weapon, such as a blunderbuss or swivel gun, will do half normal damage. Crushing and cutting weapons will do normal damage.

The Guardian is harmed by sunlight (1d per 5 minutes of exposure), and will hide in the temple during the day, indistinguishable from the other corpses. It may become active during the day if it sees fit (for example, if the PCs come in and start trashing the place), but will not venture out of the inner chamber, and will try to avoid the shaft of sunlight which falls on and around the altar during the day. If sunlight falls upon the Guardian's skin at any time, the dried and leathery hide will smoke briefly and the Guardian will leap back out of the light – a big clue to observant mortals!

Magic

The Guardian has the following spells: Beast-Soother, Beast Summoning, Insect Control, Spider Control (a modified version of Insect Control), Reptile Control, Mammal Control, Fear, Zombie. All of these spells are known at level 18 (the creature's IQ).

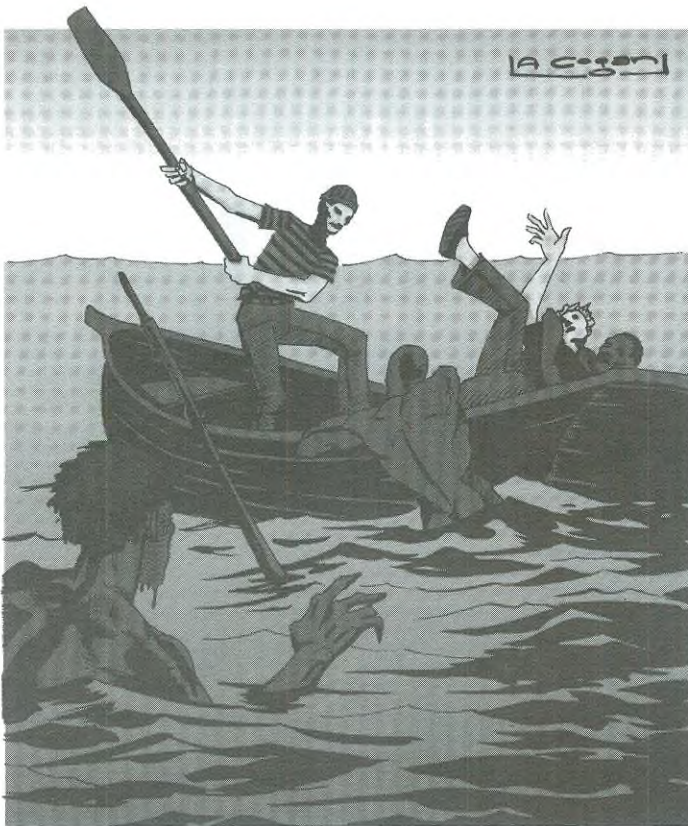
The Guardian's version of the Zombie spell costs only 2 points per body, and may be used at a distance of up to 10 yards. However, the Zombies it creates only last until the next dawn. The bodies cannot be re-used.

Equipment

The Guardian is armed with a carved wooden war club, decorated with a shell inlay and studded with obsidian blades. The club does sw+2 crushing damage, has a reach of 1, and weighs around 6 pounds. It also has an obsidian knife, which counts as a dagger if used in combat; the Guardian will not use this knife as a weapon, as it is a sacred object to the dead priest's cult, and is used for removing hearts for sacrifice.

Motivation and Tactics

The Guardian has two motives in this adventure. The first is to collect the hearts of anyone who comes to the



island, so that they can be offered up in sacrifice to the dark gods of the temple. The second motive – which is no less compelling – is to protect the temple from robbery and desecration, and avenge any act of impiety that takes place there. Both motives can be elegantly combined by simply wiping out the PCs and everyone with them.

The GM should take the Guardian's high intelligence, special powers, and knowledge of the island into account while running this adventure. It will not show itself unless victory is assured, and will certainly not engage in suicide attacks. Instead, it will remain hidden in the darkness and the jungle, relying on its special powers to provide it with troops. It will try to weaken the PCs and their companions, picking off a victim here and there to wear down the trespassers' numbers, get more hearts for sacrifice, and animate the corpses for an attack. A typical attack will begin with a few snakes sneaking aboard the PCs' vessel or into their camp and biting whoever they can. Those who die as a result can then be animated as zombies, and ordered to remain inactive until told otherwise. When there are half-a-dozen or so zombies, the Guardian will send in waves of snakes, spiders and rats as interference, and order all the zombies to rise up simultaneously and attack.

Two or three night attacks of this kind, backed up with constant hit-and-run attacks from venomous spiders and snakes, should weaken the intruders (and work on their nerves) to the point where another assault could completely wipe them out. Only then will the Guardian show itself and take a direct hand in the proceedings. In the first or second attack, the Guardian will make sure that the vessel is sufficiently damaged to prevent anyone from escaping.

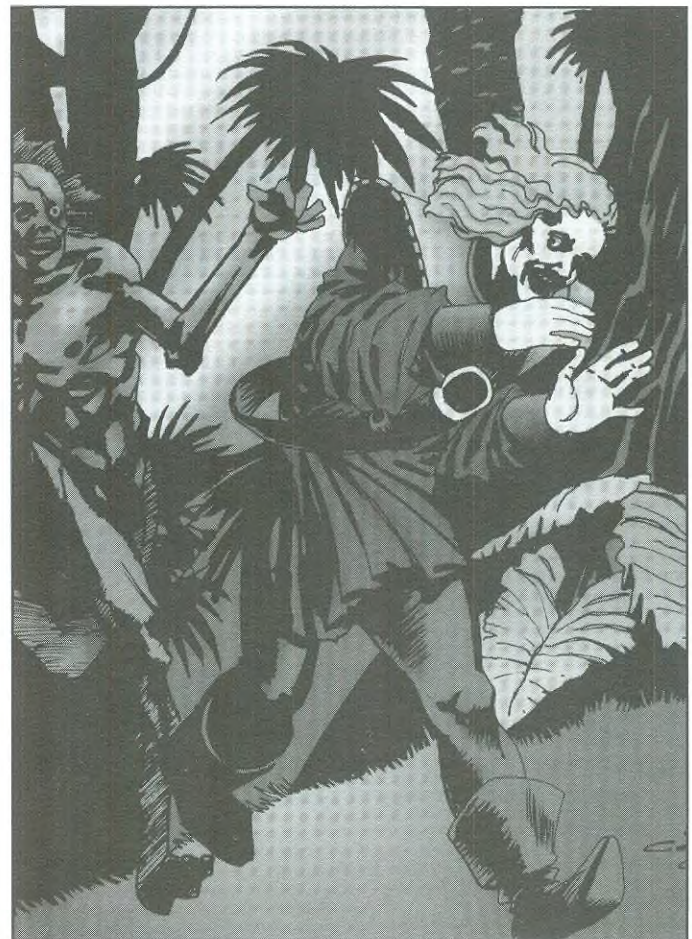
Trespasser's Isle

These cat-and-mouse tactics are far more appropriate to a horror adventure than the stand-up fights common in action-adventure stories, and they also play the monster to the best effect. If the castaways cannot fathom what is behind the mysterious occurrences, or see only a shadowy movement in the undergrowth before the zombies or snakes strike, they are likely to experience genuine fear rather than the adrenaline rush of combat. The GM should play the whole adventure for the maximum horror effect, and be ready to impose Fright Checks as the nerves of the PCs and their companions become more and more frayed. As the attacks continue, companion NPCs should run screaming into the night on at least one occasion, to return with glassy eyes, stiff limbs and large, ragged holes in their chests.

Zombies

ST: 11	Move/Dodge: 5/3	Size: 1
DX: 10	PD/DR: 0/0	Weight: 120-160 lbs.
IQ: 8	Damage: 1d+1 cr	
HT: 10/15	Reach: C	

GURPS Horror has detailed rules for zombies. The zombies will not be able to use firearms, since the Guardian, who controls them, doesn't know how firearms work. They may use muskets and pistols as clubs, however. Fright Checks are definitely in order when PCs (and NPCs) see the dead bodies of their former comrades coming to attack them!



MOCK HORROR ADVENTURES

by Scott Paul Maykrantz

da horror . . . da horror . . .

Mock horror adventures are one-shots based on low-budget, high-gore “slasher flicks” and satirical horror movies. The plots are simple, the player characters are common people, and there tends to be a lot of screaming.

Mock horror adventures have a shock appeal and a low level of sophistication, just like most of your fellow gamers. The three key elements are (1) gore, (2) cheesy, juvenile plots and creatures, and (3) Tor Johnson. These are adventures for those of you who can't decide which you like more, *Friday the 13th* or *Plan 9 from Outer Space*. (You'll also find inspiration in *Young Frankenstein* and *Scooby Doo*.)

Not everything in the adventure has to make sense. In fact, almost nothing makes sense. Production values are low. The characters don't actually see the zipper on the monster's back, but no one would be surprised if they did. The player characters are, not heroes. When they are in peril, they scream, run, and fight frantically. They want to survive, not save the world.

Mock horror adventures can take place in any age or any world. Most take place in modern America, but other exotic environments are possible – World War I or World War II, a post-holocaust world, Iowa, outer space, the bottom of the ocean, any foreign country with a name ending

in “vania,” the Roaring '20s, the Dark Ages, or the near future.

The “plot” of a mock adventure is simple. Immediately after the PCs meet each other, they discover that they are trapped in their current setting with a Menace (a creature, a psychopath, etc.) that can kill them in a very gory manner. The Menace is much more powerful than they are. But they've got lots of running room, a few places to hide, and (if they're resourceful) they might find something they can use to destroy the Menace. When the sun comes up the next morning, either the Menace or the player characters are dead. The end.

These adventures are a great way to introduce your players to the horror roleplaying genre, or just to take a break from your current campaign. You can create and play a mock adventure all in one night.

Hey! How Do I Design a Mock Horror Adventure?

It's easy. First, come up with a theme and a title for the adventure. Next, create the Menace – the creature (or creatures) that the PCs must destroy in order to survive. Map the various settings where the action will take place. Let the players create their characters, and then start playing.

Each of these steps is detailed in the next few pages. This is followed by a short section about playing the adventure you've created.

These adventure design guidelines are quick. Mock adventures are meant to be laughingly simple, so there is no need for complex plots or skillful character roleplaying. Just wing it.

The Theme and Title

The theme of a mock horror adventure is the one scary idea on which the adventure is based. Yes, *one* idea – the plot should be painfully simplistic. The theme can be (a) the location where most of the conflict takes place, (b) the Menace of the adventure, or (c) an object that plays an important role in the adventure. You should be able to sum up the theme with a short phrase. This phrase is your adventure title.

Example: The theme is a hotel where the adventure takes place. It's a castle in the Transylvanian highlands. The proprietor is Mister Hans Sate. The title of the adventure is “The Sate Inn.” The adventure takes place in some pre-World War II era. Although the hotel's guests never come back alive, travel guides recommend it (especially the food, served by Master Chef Hannibal).

The Menace

The Menace is the evil thing that threatens to murder the PCs: an alien, a vampire, a robot, a demon, a living house, whatever. The Menace can be a group of creatures: a horde of zombies, a swarm of huge bats, a trio of psychos, or an otherworldly creature with a handful of henchthings. To create your Menace (or customize an existing creature), use these five steps.

Example: The Menace in “The Sate Inn” is a small army of deformed, possibly-undead humanoids called Monster Men. Their leader is a gargoye-like creature with a human head that lives in the bowels of the castle: Hans Sate himself.

1. What Can It Do?

If you’re designing your own Menace, here’s a few tips. First of all, get a feel for the type of creatures and psychos that appear in slasher flicks. Few are fast or smart. Most of them are very large, very strong, dumb, grotesque, and eager to mutilate helpless humans. Hey, can you blame them?

Second, powers should be of the physical, combat-intensive variety. The Menace doesn’t need telepathy because it isn’t looking for information; it just wants to kill, and resist attacks against it so it can keep killing. Violent psionic abilities, most super powers, and natural attack advantages are appropriate.

Third, goofy Menaces are best. If it is an alien, it should have a laser rifle and speak perfect English. If you can’t help but imagine the Menace in black and white, you’re on the right track.

The Menace might have some abilities that are difficult to define in game terms. Don’t worry about getting everything down to hard numbers and Character Point costs, as long as you have a good idea what the Menace can do. If the Menace is an army of zombies and the people it kills become zombies, just make a



note of it; don’t search for just the right advantage or skill to simulate this effect.

Example: The Monster Men are Walking Dead (see *GURPS Horror*, p. 67), but worse. Their entrails hang out of their bodies. They moan and howl. They drool. They rarely bathe. They can be found lurking around every corner of the castle. Most use an old tool or heavy object as a weapon (choose from the sidebar on p. H75). Note that Monster Men can be inexplicably armed with modern implements like garden weasels – a little dose of bad continuity never hurt anyone . . .

Hans Sate has ST 50, IQ 12, DX 4, and HT 15/70. He has DR 30 and regenerates 1 HT per minute! He suffers from Lecherousness, Megalomania, Sadism, Delusions, Halitosis, etc. He has taloned toes (+1d cutting); his strength does 5d+2 thrust, 8d-1 swing (but he misses almost every time).

He can transform humans into Monster Men by hypnotizing them. He has Hypnotism-17. After a successful roll, the victim falls unconscious. Then the transformation begins. 3d minutes later, the victim is a Monster Man, totally subservient to Hans Sate.

2. Where Did It Come From?

Give the Menace a little background, where it came from and how it was created. You don’t have to go into too much detail. The background can be tied into the clue to the Menace’s Critical Weakness (more on that later).

Some possible places of origin include: another world (a dimension, planet, or time), a laboratory, a tomb or grave, the basement of an old building, or an acre or two of untouched wilderness (the bottom of a canyon, the inside of a cave, an eerie forested hilltop in an Indian reservation, etc.).

Example: Hans Sate sold his soul to the devil. In exchange for his soul, the devil magically paid off the castle’s mortgage. As an afterthought, the devil transformed Hans, gave him super powers, and turned all the hotel’s guests into Monster Men. The devil is like that.

3. What Does It Want?

Choose one of these three:

It Wants to Kill: The Menace wants to kill every creature it encounters. Maybe it needs to kill to survive. Or maybe it’s just having a bad day. This is often the most terrifying goal – the Menace concentrates solely on murder, so it must be good at it.

It Wants to Increase its Power: The Menace wants to increase its power by perpetrating some deed regularly (kill innocent people, hypnotize people into becoming its servants, etc.). We don't know what the Menace will do with its increased power. All it wants for now is to get stronger. If the PCs can't stop it, they'll be dead before they find out.

It Wants to Rule the World: The Menace wants it all – total power over everything. This can be Earth, the galaxy, or even the whole universe. It has a scheme to achieve this goal, and the PCs are the only thing standing in its way. This goal could include the other two goals: the Menace kills to increase its power, which in turn allows it to rule the world.

Example: Hans wants to increase his power. He does this by transforming hapless male visitors into Monster Men. Females are forced to sire his children, who are then transformed into Monster Men. The children of Hans are all male. What will he do when the castle is full of Monster Men? He hasn't thought about that yet.

4. How Will it React to Opposition?

The PCs are going to try to stop the Menace from achieving its goal. Make a note of what the Menace will do when it encounters resistance. Responses come in three categories.

Basic responses are what the Menace does against all non-threatening resistance. When the Menace first runs into the PCs, this is its response. This will be its most common mode of attack – its claws, spells, axe, whatever.

Responses to potent resistance are responses triggered by the Menace's survival instinct. These responses occur when the Menace feels it is in danger of being seriously injured or killed. This will involve backup plans, secret weapons, or more vicious attacks.

Last ditch responses are the Menace's final stabs at survival. This occurs when the Menace is mortally wounded and/or is in great danger of being destroyed. This is its Big Attack, its Secret Weapon.

Of course, the exact modes of resistance depend on the brains of the Menace. If the Menace is a horde of giant bats, none of their responses will involve strategic counterattacks on the PCs. Their response to potent resistance will be to claw and bite even more than usual. Their last ditch response will be to try to escape. If the Menace is a gang of demon-worshipers, their responses will be carefully planned, involving special weapons and combat strategies.

Example: The basic response of the Monster Men is to claw, bite, and attack with weapons. Their response to potent resistance is to shriek and make All-Out Attacks. Their last ditch response is to shriek . . . and run away.

Hans Sate's basic response is his hypnosis. His response to potent resistance is to smash assailants with his fists, claw at them, taunt them



and make fun of their haircuts, whack them with his wings, or slash at them with his tail. His last ditch response is to run away (to fight again later).

5. What Is Its Critical Weakness?

The Menace should have a Critical Weakness, a vulnerability that allows the PCs to destroy it. The PCs will have to learn the Menace's Critical Weakness during the course of the adventure. Go ahead and define the Critical Weakness in game terms (probably a Vulnerability, Dependency, or Weakness).

Some possible Critical Weaknesses include: vulnerable to fire, hypnotized by bright light, lulled by music, will do anything for a slice of Spam, will obey anyone who threatens to harm or destroy a person or object that means a lot to it (for example, the Menace has a Dependent NPC the PCs could kidnap), can't swim or survive under water, destroyed by a certain spell, dependent on a drug to stay alive.

The Critical Weakness will either kill the Menace, or make it weak enough to be killed with conventional weapons. The PCs have to use the Critical Weakness to survive the adventure.

Example: The Monster Men die when frightened! Anything that might scare a regular person has the same chance to scare a Monster Man. And, because the Monster Men are stupid, wearing a sheet and moaning a lot might work! Make a Fright Check for all the Monster Men present when the players come up with a good scare. If it fails, they crumble to dust. If they make the roll, they All-Out Attack.

Don't worry if the players get good at this. There's an effectively infinite number of Monster Men. And – let's face it – the players will have fun devising frights for zombies.

The Critical Weakness of Hans Sate is his throat. His DR there is 0. Ten hits in one blow with a cutting weapon will decapitate him.

The Setting

Decide where this adventure takes place. It will take place in *one* area. The area can be rather large – a small town or island. But it might be very small – a cabin, a ten-man spacecraft, a theater.

A great way to come up with a detailed setting is to find a high-quality map in a roleplaying game product (a *GURPS* book, or some other game product). The map could be part of a superhero adventure, a fantasy sourcebook, or anything else. Fantasy adventures offer great maps of castles and underground tunnels. And most superhero adventures have maps of modern places like museums or a few floors of a skyscraper.

You might even find a group of maps, the first of the general area and the others offering detailed views of certain sections of the area. Suppose the setting is a small New England town. You'll want a map of the entire town, supported by maps of each major building, the local sewer system, the park, and the graveyard.

Whatever the setting, it must fit these two requirements:

- (1) The PCs cannot escape until the Menace is destroyed.
- (2) There are hidden locations in the setting which hold the clues to the Menace's Critical Weakness.

No Escape

The player characters will discover soon enough that they can't escape until the Menace is dead. They are isolated from the outside world, and cannot get help.

Their imprisonment might involve physical barriers. They could be in a haunted house with shifting rooms, preventing them from finding a door or window that leads to the outdoors. They could be on an island with no access to a boat or plane. They could be locked in the dungeon of a castle, trapped until they can pry open one of the thick oak doors that leads to the ground level.



Their imprisonment can also be emotional. A DNPC could be held prisoner by the Menace. Or maybe the Menace is a loved one who has been transformed; the PCs must “kill” the Menace by causing it to change back.

Hidden Locations

As the PCs explore the setting they should find hidden locations, small places that are hard to reach or locate. This could be a secret room under ground, an attic, a natural shelf at the top of a cliff, a nook behind the engine room in an ocean-liner, or a tiny island in the middle of small lake.

Some of the hidden locations will contain information about the Critical Weakness, and/or weapons used to attack this vulnerability. Other hidden locations are just used to hide from the Menace, a place to rest and plan a survival strategy.

Each hidden location should be hard to find but easy to enter, or easy to find but hard to enter.

For example, let's say the adventure takes place on an old satellite space station. The PCs search the on-board computer and learn that there is a secret chamber somewhere on board. The Menace has been chasing them around the space station. It has already gobbled up all of the NPCs, and it's hot on the heroes' trail. But the computer does not say where the chamber is located. Eventually, they find it – a small lab located under the cargo bay floor. They have no trouble entering the lab. Alternately, the computer could show the exact location of the lab right off the bat but, when the PCs arrive, they find the Menace in the cargo bay, waiting for them.

At least one hidden location in the setting must be stocked with the key to the Critical Weakness. This can be a weapon that strikes at its Critical Weakness, or something that merely tells them what the Critical Weakness is. If the latter, they have to find the weapon in another hidden location, or construct it themselves.



If the Critical Weakness is a spell, a book containing the spell (describing exactly how to cast it) should be in the location. If the Critical Weakness is music (soft melodies put it to sleep), then the hidden location can contain a phonograph player, stereo system, or whatever music-playing instrument is appropriate to the setting.

The key to the Critical Weakness does not have to be immediately obvious or usable. The PCs may have to test their Critical Weakness-attacking weapon. Or, they may have to find a second hidden location and combine items found in both.

Example: The Sate Inn has the same floor plan (coincidentally enough) as the Castle of another adventure the GM owns. Once the PCs enter, the doors slam shut. A raging storm outside keeps them from climbing out of windows and down the walls. There are lots of hidden locations – just take a look at the map and let your imagination run wild.

Two locations will reveal Hans' Critical Weakness (the Monster Men's Critical Weakness will have to

be discovered by accident). In a room full of books, there is a big red tome that begs to be examined. Inside is a picture of a creature that looks vaguely like Hans (bat wings, small human head, etc.). The text describes a mythic warrior killing the creature by decapitating it. The second location is a room holding one of Hans' expectant mothers; she almost got away from Hans when she tried to choke him. She's fairly sure that's his weak spot because he yelled out, "Hey! Not my throat! That's my weak spot!"

Stock the Setting

After you've found or created a setting that meets the two requirements, stock the setting.

Stock the setting with vehicles, tools, weapons, clothing, old junk in storage, books, appliances, furniture, etc. You don't have to list every single item, of course. Just make a map key and list the general types of places. From the place descriptions, you should have a good idea what can be found there. For example, if Room #4 is a "Study," we can assume it has plenty of books, a desk,

and a few chairs. When the PC get to a particular location in the setting, then you'll have to decide *exactly* what can be found there.

Feel free to stock the settings with weapons . . . but only those weapons that *cannot easily* kill or cripple the Menace. If the PCs are being chased by a 40-foot spider, steak knives will not hurt it. So the setting can have as many steak knives on the premises as you want.

Of course, the PCs could come up with resourceful uses for a handful of steak knives. Encourage this. They might use the knives to attack the spider's vulnerable eyes. Or they could line the bottom of a pit with steak knives, then trick the spider into falling into it.

Items that do not require resourcefulness to be effective should be hard to get to, operate, or move. In other words, balance all of the truly valuable stuff with limitations. If the PCs are in dire need for a source of light, any light source should be difficult to find or use, or impossible to transport.

Example: The castle/hotel is full of medieval stuff, early 20th-century

stuff, and some anachronistic modern stuff. The guests of the past decades have dragged just about everything into the place, so go wild. There are also quite a few swords (perfect for decapitating people, if you know what I mean). The castle also has lots of really gross stuff in it: dismembered bodies, puddles of blood, Spam, muck and guck in the plumbing system, two-headed rats, heads rolling down the stairs, etc.

Player Characters

Characters in a mock adventure are *not* heroes. Special circumstances may push them to make desperate actions that seem heroic (see *Heroic Responses*, below), but they are not courageous adventurers.

They only want to get away from the Menace alive. A character who wants to save others from the Menace (in addition to himself) will invariably convince himself that the best way to save the others is to save himself first so he can find help. The characters won't sacrifice each other to save themselves (no backstabbing is necessary to stay in character), but they won't stick around to save everyone else if they can get away, either.

Character Types

The Player Characters are always 25-pointers . . . or less. They come from realistic walks of life. They have normal lives and they want to keep it that way. To them, a boring, non-glamorous existence is infinitely preferable to a gruesome death by supernatural forces.

Character Professions

Don't allow FBI agents, special operations soldiers, or telepathic Olympic athletes. If a player wants a character who can fight, let him play a former amateur boxer, an ex-con, or a bouncer.

Character professions should be funny. Pick one that is a) so mundane, it's humiliating, b) completely irrelevant, c) strange and impossible to describe, or d) all of the above.

Examples:

a) Assembly-line worker, clothing inspector, janitor, garbage collector, ditch-digger, tele-marketer, door-to-door salesman.

b) Professional cheerleader, RPG freelancer, Caucasian "world music" critic, bingo organizer, weather man on local news, mall security.

c) USFS AFCM of the CWP-FCNR (south branch), performance artist, mung specialist, fiberglass finish re-furbish consultant.

d) Graveyard shift guy at Kinko's.

Playing a common, run-of-the-mill police officer is fine. You're bound to have at least one player who wants to play a cop, if only so he can justify a high Guns skill level. But don't allow a player to play special agents, investigative officers, or Dirty Harry.

Character Abilities

Characters with abilities beyond the norm are not appropriate for this type of adventure.

Skills should fit the character's profession. Don't pick a skill just because you like it or you think it might be useful (it's hard to justify a plumber who knows ninja-style martial arts). Some skills can be attributed to hobbies, non-professional interests, and former occupations . . . but don't push it.

Resourcefulness Skills: Some skills will signify the measure of a character's resourcefulness. Engineer, Armoury, Mechanic, and Scrounging can be used to build weapons from available mechanical parts, or to identify and use unusual machinery. For example, Elliot the Electronics Expert uses his Engineer skill to build a wire net at the foot of a tower supporting high-voltage power lines. He plans to lure the Menace to the net so it will fry itself on the wires.

Streetwise, Survival, Fast-Talk, Hobby Skills, and many Professional Skills are also significant resourcefulness skills. A character with HS: Undead Lore might be able to identify what kind of creature is after

him . . . and how to kill it. Of course, the *player* has to come up with the resourceful ideas – the skill roll just determines if it works or not.

Disadvantages: All appropriate disadvantages are allowed. Players who take inappropriate (or too many) Disadvantages will pay the price when the GM brings them into play. If your plumber's Enemy is the US Government (very unlikely), the Secret Service will show up at the beginning of the adventure and arrest him, forcing the player out of the game before it even begins. And then they'll confiscate everyone's computers.

Some Disadvantages are recommended. Dependent NPCs can be used by the GM to make the adventure more suspenseful (when the DNPC is missing, everyone searches frantically), and to keep the PCs in the setting (the Menace has the DNPC in its clutches). Mental disadvantages are appropriate when they reflect the mental attitude of a common, mundane person. Recommended: Pacifism (Code Against Killing), Mild Phobia of the supernatural, Intolerance.

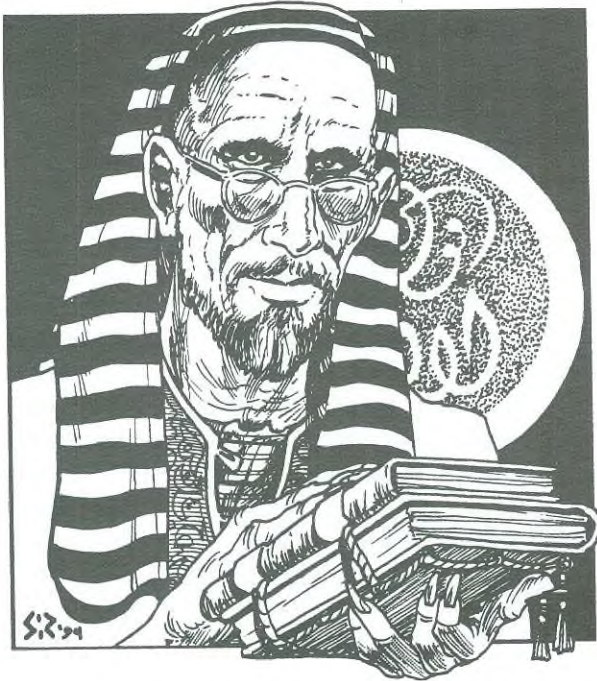
Personalities

Personalities should be simplistic, even stereotypical. If a player wants to, he can have a little fun playing an *over-stereotyped* character. For example, an over-stereotyped nerd would carry a pocket protector full of pens and pencils, have black-rimmed glasses with tape on the bridge, and would become catatonically shy around attractive members of the opposite sex. Of course, the over-stereotyped nerd will also have a high IQ . . .

Other stereotypes are possible, but be sure to avoid insulting your fellow gamers. This is one aspect of mock horror films that you don't need to recreate. Playing a nerd is fine, but no one will be amused if you play a stereotypical Southern bigot, or a woman who can't do anything but scream and shed her clothes.

Heroic Responses: For every player character, there is one situation that will trigger a heroic response – the character will risk his life, sanity, and soul to change the situation. This situation stirs something deep inside the character, making him forget all present dangers. Usually, the situation is a threat to a loved one's life.

Each player should come up with one heroic response situation for his character. Make sure the situations



are not too specific (“Becomes heroic when his nephew is kidnapped by Russian zombies in July.”) or vague (“Becomes heroic when he or anyone around him is in danger.”). Good examples include: a doctor becomes heroic when one of her patients is in a critical condition, a boy with a faithful pet dog becomes heroic when his dog is killed, a veteran soldier becomes heroic when anyone who has saved his life is in danger. Any character becomes heroic when his loved one's life is threatened.

Non-Player Characters

Create a few NPCs when you stock the setting. NPCs are created just like PCs, except their personalities are even more simplistic and they

have no heroic responses. When faced with danger, all but the stupidest or craziest NPCs will run.

They come in four general varieties: cannon-fodder, caricatures, local weirdoes, and the savior. None of them are required parts of a mock horror adventure. The first two types will be used if the adventure takes place in a populated area. The second two are purely optional.

Every adventure must have a big, bald, dumb guy NPC – *this is Tor Johnson, from Plan 9 (p. AH6).*

Cannon-Fodder

These NPCs are born to die. They are normal, mundane people who just happen to get killed more often than player characters. This gives the PCs someone to run into, briefly converse with, and then discover seconds later horribly mutilated by the Menace. Their personalities are irrelevant, and so are their stats.

Caricatures

These characters are just like cannon-fodder NPCs, except that only one of each type exists in the adventure. They are colorful stereotypes. The personality of each can be summed up in a quote. Here's a few possible caricature NPCs.

The Witness: “A-and then . . . I saw the thirty-foot Koala . . . tear Professor Jackson's head off! It was awful I tell you, awful! <sob>”

The Old Sheriff: “You saw a *what?* Have you been drinking?”

The Young Sheriff: “Wait, sir. I've got a gut-feeling she's not lying.”

The Brainy Doctor/Scientist: “Don't interrupt me! Can't you see I'm working?”

The Hillbilly/Backwoodsman: “You all git offa my land!”

The Local Weirdo

The local weirdo is a neighborhood fixture. He lives with the general populace and can go wherever he wants, but he chooses to keep to himself most of the time.

He has a strange appearance and unusual mannerisms. He might twitch, smell like gasoline, scratch himself constantly, argue with himself, act like a bird, wear a white stripe in his hair, carry a dead animal in a sack, continuously write notes in a ragged notebook, or call everyone “Betty.” For inspiration, watch a David Lynch movie.

In the adventure, the local weirdo encounters the PCs, says and does something funny (or eerie), then he leaves. When the weirdo speaks, he may quote a prophecy regarding the PCs (which may come true or not), ask them random questions (“What's your mother's maiden name? Why? Do you think that's *my* last name?”), or pretend he's somebody he obviously is not (he introduces himself as the Duke of Windsor).

He will make from one to four of these brief appearances in the adventure. What he says and does may or may not have an effect on the adventure – that's for the GM to know and the players to find out.

The Savior

The savior NPC is the GM's tool to help the PCs survive – when the heroes are dangerously close to dying and everyone is having too much fun to end the adventure, the savior NPC shows up to keep them alive. Use this type of character sparingly, as he tends to steal the limelight.

The savior is a parapsychologist, ghost detective, outdoorsman (if the adventures place in the wilderness), scientist, medical doctor, cop, etc. Most of his aid comes in the form of advice, information, and shouts of “Look out!” that warn the PCs just in time. Physical disadvantages (blind, lame, weak from sickness or old age) will help limit the savior's ability to assist the PCs.

Before the final scene in the adventure (when the PCs destroy the Menace), the savior NPC will be killed by the Menace. He will be a martyr, having given his life to save the heroes. As he dies, he will give them vital information as his last words. This death will force the heroes to destroy the Menace themselves – the savior can't do *everything* for them.

Example: “The Sate Inn” is open for lots of NPCs. The other hotel guests are cannon-fodder, locals can show up as caricatures, and there's room for two or three local weirdoes. If a savior is introduced, he could be a visiting scientist, a veteran soldier, a cliffhanging adventurer, or maybe Elvis.

Playing a Mock Horror Adventure

You've created your adventure. You've got a theme and title, a Menace, a well-stocked setting, a handful of player characters, and a few NPCs. Now you can play it.

For the most part, mock horror adventures are played just like any other kind of adventure. The differences are described below.

The Establishing Scenes

All mock horror adventures start off with these three establishing scenes: the PCs meet each other, the PCs meet the Menace, the PCs learn they are trapped. If this adventure was a 90-minute “slasher movie,” these scenes would take place in the first half-hour.

When the PCs (and NPCs) meet each other, let everyone roleplay a little. This scene occurs during daylight hours, ending just as the sun goes down. Everyone will have fun acquainting themselves with the rest of the PC group. During this scene, a character might develop a “crush” on another character (which may result in a Heroic Response later in the adventure). Some characters will also develop rivalries.

Soon after the sun goes down, the Menace shows up. You can introduce the Menace through mysterious disappearances of some of the NPCs, an outright attack by the Menace, or both. Either way, as soon as the night comes, the players will know that they are in immediate danger of being horribly killed. If the players roleplay accurately, their characters' first response will be to get as far as possible from the Menace. But, as they try to escape, they discover that they are trapped.

Now the adventure is under way. The chase is on.

The Chase

After the establishing scenes, the PCs are chased around the setting by the Menace. They have to survive long enough to find the hidden locations in the setting, discover the Menace's Critical Weakness, and prepare to destroy the Menace. This is the majority of the adventure; in a 90-minute film, the chase starts after the first half-hour, and lasts until the final 10 minutes.

Keep the chase suspenseful. The Menace should be a hair's-breadth away from grabbing and killing the PCs. If a PC hurts the Menace, it will slow down or run away (only to return, of course). The PCs can use this time to search for a way to destroy the Menace.

Prevent Escapes

If they keep trying to escape, let them know that they are wasting their time. Once they accept the fact that they have to destroy the Menace to escape, their chances of surviving increase.

If a player comes up with a viable method of escape before the Menace has been destroyed, delay the escape plan or throw in a random event that makes the escape plan impossible. If the PCs call on a radio for help, delay the saviors until dawn. If the PCs fix an old helicopter and are about to fly away, an NPC could

hijack the craft and leave the PCs behind.

Keep It Scary, Bloody, and Goofy

To scare everyone, use shock effects like ambush attacks by the Menace, explosions, and sudden discoveries of the Menace's past victims. Throw in a few incidental surprises as well, horrors that don't have any relation to the Menace. You could trap the PCs in a tomb full of decaying corpses. They might run into a batch of vermin, snakes, or spiders.

If your players like gore, go for it. Describe dismemberments in fine detail, throw in a few feasting cannibals, and be creative in your methods of killing characters. Use minor NPCs to illustrate how the Menace eliminates its enemies.

A few game mastering blunders – and outright contradictions – can be fun. The adventure will be more like a low-budget movie if the Menace somehow gains a second set of arms halfway through the gaming session. Don't explain it, just keep playing. The players will have a good laugh.

Roleplay Appropriately

Screaming is more appropriate than dialogue. Don't allow discussion during frantic chases, combat, or terrifying encounters; no one talks when they're trying desperately to stay alive. Remind the players that their characters are not heroic adventurers. They should run from danger, not confront it.

Another attitude to roleplay is disbelief – characters will convince themselves that there's no such thing as supernatural horrors. The character thinks it's all a big prank . . . until he meets the Menace face-to-face.

Bad acting is essential. Overdo it every time. And make sure your character's emotions turn on and off like a light switch. One minute he's stricken with grief, sobbing over the dead body of a friend, and the next he's laughing when one of the other characters cracks a joke.

Hey! Give 'em a Fighting Chance

If the PCs are going to survive, they have to find the hidden locations and learn about the Critical Weakness. They also need to find the weapons that can be used against the Critical Weakness. As the adventure goes on, increase the number of clues (and lucky opportunities) that will lead them to hidden locations and information. Even if the PCs die in the end, the adventure will be enjoyable if they at least made it to the final battle.

Keep All of the Players Involved

When a PC dies, there are ways to keep the player in the game. One way is to convert a major NPC into a new player character. Or, the player can help the GM by giving him scary ideas and taking the role of some of the NPCs; this makes the GM's job easier and can add a lot of new twists to an existing game. Better yet, let the player act as the narrator – in his best imitation of Orson Wells (or James Earl Jones), the player can passionately describe the actions of the remaining PCs and the settings for the rest of the adventure.

The Final Battle!

The chase ends when the PCs know the Critical Weakness, they have the weapons needed to strike at that Critical Weakness, and they are too tired to keep running. They are about to begin the climax of the adventure: the final battle.

This is a battle between the PCs and the Menace. The Menace will use its Last Ditch Responses. The PCs will be triggered to action by their Heroic Responses. They will use the weapons that exploit the Critical Weakness. This climatic battle should take place in a dramatic location: the edge of a cliff, a temple room, the tower of a castle, etc.

Unlike the rest of the adventure, the final battle feels like the climax of a first-rate romantic adventure. These final scenes are full of young men leaping into the jaws of doom

to save their girlfriends, unexpected heroes drawing on hidden reserves of determination, and the destruction of a creature that threatens the lives of unseen innocents. If this part of the adventure becomes an engaging drama for the players, forget being silly until it's over. If it stays silly, make it worse.



If the PCs survive, they heave a sigh of relief and look forward to returning to their normal lives. If they die – well, the game's over and the bad guys won. Hopefully, a failed adventure will end in a punch line.

As the Credits Roll

Any surviving PCs will look around at each other, amazed and dead-tired, surprised that they survived. The sun comes up. Any calls for help (by radio, messenger, or otherwise) made during the chase will be answered at this time (calls for help are always answered too late).

Some of the “surviving” PCs may not have escaped the Menace fully intact. A character may be alive, but incurably insane – the horrors he faced were too much for his fragile mind. A character might destroy the Menace just after he has received a mortal wound or lost a limb. He falls after delivering the final blow to the Menace, surviving long enough for some melodramatic last words.

Back to Our Example . . .

When playing “The Sate Inn,” the establishing scenes can be full of bad tourism jokes (assuming the PCs are Americans). Make good use of the line “We have only one room, but it's haunted.” To get them checked in, Hans could have a human underlying like Igor, an old man who does everything from bellhop to chef. Let the chase begin after the characters have bedded down for the night.

Once they relax, the fun begins. Maybe a Monster Man will bring them room service. They could hear noises (distant screams, etc.) and start creeping around the castle. Any DNPCs are sure to disappear as soon as the lights go out.

Roleplay Hans as a violent but stupid madman. He tries to act like an intellectual when he encounters the PCs, but he always comes off sounding dumb. “I'm the Einstein of evil! Only my mindless Monster Men are smart enough to recognize my great power!” During the final battle, make sure he trashes enough of the castle to start it crumbling after he dies. Just before he dies, he says: “My plan would have worked if it weren't for you meddling kids.” When he dies, the Monster Men die.

I WAS A TEEN-AGE DINOSAUR!

An Adventure for *GURPS Atomic Horror*
By James L. Cambias

"I Was a Teen-Age Dinosaur!" is a *GURPS Atomic Horror* adventure, set in the 1950s. It is suitable for characters of any point value. The *GURPS* basic rules and the *Atomic Horror* worldbook are necessary to run this scenario; Game Masters may also find *Supers* useful.

An Unusual Discovery

The eminent geologist Professor Jerome Winston has made a remarkable discovery in the mountains of Wyoming. While conducting a mineralogical survey near the small town of Ortonville, Winston found a complete fossil skeleton of a new species of dinosaur. What makes the discovery so unusual is that the dinosaur bones were deposited near a vein of thorium ore. Over millions of years, the minerals in the bones were replaced with thorium and uranium compounds. The fossil is highly radioactive!

Involving the Characters

There are several ways to involve the characters in this adventure. Scientists will be invited by Professor Winston to help study the fossils. Physicists, biologists, or geologists are the most likely specialists to be invited. Winston is not familiar with handling radioactive material, and needs experienced help.

Reporters can be sent to cover the story by their editors. Other characters may simply be vacationing in Ortonville, or know Professor Winston socially. The Theoretical Science Foundation (from the *Atomic Horror* rulebook) may ask the characters to investigate the odd fossil. Alternatively, the GM may simply wish to replace Winston with a scientist PC.

Ortonville

Ortonville, Wyoming, is a typical American small town of the 1950s. There are 3,000 people in Ortonville itself, with another couple of thousand living on ranches and farms in the surrounding countryside. The town's chief industry is mining, and it serves as a market and rail center for the surrounding area. Fossil hunters can reach Ortonville by train or by car. There are no airports in the area, and the mountainous terrain makes landing a plane perilous.

Visitors to Ortonville can stay at one of four places. The Pow-Wow Motel on Route 187 is a new 20-room motor court with a kidney-shaped swimming pool and air conditioning in every room (\$6 per night). The Pine Ridge Dude Ranch is a working ranch with rooms for 12 guests (\$60 per week). Mrs. Bailey's Boarding House has six rooms (\$3.50 per night, no smoking, no visitors in the rooms). The Ortonville Hotel, across from the railroad station, has 16 rooms, all with hot water (\$5 per night, \$8 with bath).



The Dig

Professor Winston found the dinosaur skeleton embedded in the bank of a small canyon west of Ortonville. The land belongs to Jake Benson, a prosperous local rancher. Winston paid Benson \$1,000 for the right to excavate the fossil, and Benson has been very helpful about protecting the site. Only Benson and Winston's assistants know the actual location of the find; everyone else knows only that it is "someplace out on Jake Benson's spread."

The canyon is dry most of the time, but during a rainstorm it can quickly fill up with water, often with no warning. A rainstorm in the mountains can cause flash floods further downstream. Summertime is dry season in the Rockies, so there is little risk of a storm, but the GM may wish to throw one in to liven things up.

If the player characters study the site with Geiger counters or other devices to detect radioactivity, they will learn that the entire area is very rich in heavy metals. The radiation levels are safe enough to allow camping in the area.

The Camp

Professor Winston has set up camp above the canyon. He is sleeping in an Airstream trailer, while his assistants are in tents. Winston has three assistants – Calvin Barnard, Susan Parker, and his nephew Claude Winston. Calvin and Susan are local high-school students interested in science.

Winston can provide tents for anyone joining his dig, but anyone wanting a little more comfort will have to buy or rent their own camping gear. Susan Parker handles most of the cooking for the team. Female characters can help her if they wish, but she would feel insulted if one of the men tries to lend a hand.

The Professor and his assistants get up before dawn, so they can start work on the fossil at first light. They usually take a two-hour break in the middle of the day when the canyon heats up, then work until sunset. Once or twice a week somebody will go into town for supplies.

The Dinosaur

Heavy rains during the spring exposed the dinosaur fossil. The skeleton is in a standing position in the canyon wall, thirty feet tall, and looks terrifying and impressive when first seen. The skeleton is quite radioactive: anyone within 1 meter gets a dose of 20 rads per minute; at 2 meters it drops to 5; at 3 meters it goes down to 2; and beyond 5 meters the radiation level is less than 1 rad. At night it can be seen to glow faintly, giving it an eerie appearance.

The Professor has limited equipment to handle the fossils safely. He has borrowed some lead-lined storage boxes, and has one protective suit. Winston and the students are busy digging out the fossils and making plaster casts of them so they can be studied safely.

Examination of the bones will reveal that they are from an unknown species of large carnivorous dinosaur. By studying the bones, a successful Physiology, Zoology or Science! skill roll will indicate that the creature stood about 30 feet tall. It had large claws on its feet, and small forearms. The head has enormous jagged teeth. It was obviously a fast, powerful meat-eater. Winston has tentatively named it "Ortonosaurus."

A Geology skill roll will allow characters to date the fossil by the strata in which it is buried. Ortonosaurus existed near the end of the Cretaceous Era, when the rule of the dinosaurs was drawing to a close.

After the PCs get involved, the excavation proceeds at a good pace. Winston and the kids have freed one leg and part of the tail from the canyon wall. With the help of the player characters, he can get the creature's pelvis, spine and ribs. The head will need a crane to remove intact.

Jealousy

But something is very wrong at the dig site. Professor Winston's young nephew Claude is infatuated with pretty Susan Parker. But lately she has been showing interest in Calvin Barnard. If one of the PCs is a young man and fairly attractive (which for the purposes of this adventure means no disads causing negative reaction modifiers), then use him instead of Calvin as the object of Susan's affection and Claude's jealousy.



I Was a Teen-Age Dinosaur!

Claude has decided to use the dangerous fossils to rid himself of his rival. One day while Calvin is making a cast of the tibia with the radiation suit on, Claude will slip a fragment of radioactive dinosaur bone into the lining of Calvin's Ortonville High baseball letter jacket. (The GM should substitute an appropriate item for a PC victim.)

Radiation

Over the next few days, Calvin starts to fall sick. At first it seems like nothing more than a cold, brought on by sleeping in the chilly mountain air. He feels weak and has dizzy spells. Then more alarming symptoms start to develop. Calvin's hair starts falling out and his skin becomes rough and scaly. His appetite is unaffected, though – if anything he seems hungrier than ever.

It requires a Physician, Nuclear Physics or Science! roll to recognize Calvin's symptoms as radiation poisoning. He should be hospitalized at once. If none of the characters makes the diagnosis, the town doctor, Dr. Richard Jansen, will spot the problem after Calvin has been sick for four days.

Susan is deeply concerned when Calvin falls ill. She visits him at the hospital often, and even takes him his letter jacket to make him feel more at home. Professor Winston remains at the dig, working his team extra hard to make up for the missing person.

The player characters may want to help find out how Calvin got radiation poisoning. He swears he followed all the precautions for handling the bones. The radiation suit is intact. But a sweep of the camp with a Geiger counter reveals some contamination of Calvin's tent. Only if the characters think to test Calvin's letter jacket will they find the bone fragment. The Game Master should try to time events so that the PCs will discover this only after the radiation has affected Calvin. (If the player characters are exceptionally observant and quick-thinking, they may be able to outmaneuver the GM and prevent Calvin from being poisoned. In that case, simply have Claude swallow a bone fragment in a suicide attempt, so that he is the one who becomes a dinosaur.)

The Horror Begins

Calvin's condition does not improve after he is hospitalized. He slips into delirium and becomes irrational. His skin condition worsens, and all his hair falls out. Yet strangely he continues to gain weight. After he tries to bite one of the nurses, Dr. Jansen orders Calvin restrained.

That night, Calvin escapes. He breaks the restraints and smashes through the window, loping off into the darkness. Sheriff Trent Johnson orders a sweep of the county to find the boy. The characters may wish to join one of the search parties. Dr. Jansen insists that Calvin must be found soon, or else he may die. He is amazed at the hysterical strength Calvin displayed in his escape.

Professor Winston, while upset about the terrible turn of events, wants to continue with the excavation. Susan Parker is inconsolable. Claude Winston tries to comfort her, but she wants nothing to do with him. Characters with the Empathy or Intuition advantages may get a funny feeling that Claude is hiding something (this should only happen to characters who spend a lot of time in the camp with Claude).

For two days, the search parties comb the county without success. Sheriff Johnson devotes all his time to the hunt. He complains about wasting time on minor problems – some local ranchers are complaining about missing livestock, and the town drunk was raving about big purple monsters. But despite all the efforts of the search teams, Calvin's whereabouts remain a mystery.

The Monster Attacks

Calvin has been changing. The radioactive dinosaur bone has affected his body, causing him to become a dinosaur himself! As his mind becomes that of a savage meat-eating monster, Calvin goes on the attack.

The first attack will come at the campsite. The Calvin-monster strikes at Professor Winston's dig. Perhaps he somehow understands that the dinosaur fossils are the cause of his awful transformation. At this stage, Calvin is in an intermediate form between human and dinosaur. The monster will tear open Winston's trailer and menace the party.

"Don't shoot!" cries Professor Winston. "Maybe we can communicate with it!" As he approaches the Calvin-monster, the creature savagely strikes him down before disappearing into the night. The monster runs faster than any human can follow on foot, and the terrain is too rough for vehicles. Horses will not follow the creature.

Dinosaur on Main Street

Seriously hurt but still alive after the attack, Professor Winston will close down the dig and move to safety in town. If the characters try to convince Sheriff Johnson that there is a monster on the loose, he will be skeptical. But the very next night the Calvin-monster arrives to dispel all doubts. The streets of Ortonville fill with terrified citizens as the gigantic beast rampages through town!

The dinosaur's behavior should be determined by what is most dramatically appropriate. It may go after Claude Winston, somehow sensing that he is responsible. Calvin may abduct Susan Parker or an attractive female player character. It will almost certainly destroy the high school (wouldn't you?). If one of the PCs is the radiation victim, allow him to run the dinosaur attack.

As the creature attacks Ortonville, the characters must decide what course of action to follow. They can either try to fight the beast, perhaps by calling in help from the National Guard and the Army, or else try to save it and restore poor Calvin to normalcy.

Fearless Monster-Fighters

The people of Ortonville are terrified and scattered by the monster's attack. Only a few brave souls will gather to fight the dinosaur. In addition to Sheriff Johnson and the party, a dozen men are available. All are armed with M1 rifles, and have Guns (Rifle)-10 skill. The men are willing to shoot at the dinosaur until someone gets killed; after that they will flee unless a PC can make a

successful Leadership or Bard skill roll. Once half the group has been killed or wounded, the rest of the men will flee.

Calling in the Army

Sheriff Johnson will only call for outside help if he has seen the monster himself. Since he is only a small-town sheriff, the best help he can summon is the State Police. Twelve Wyoming State Police officers will arrive three hours later. Once they have seen the monster, they can call in the National Guard. The Governor will send two companies of the Wyoming National Guard, which will arrive by dawn. The Guard commander in turn can call in helicopters, air support and help from the military.

If the player characters have had experience dealing with atomic horrors in the past, they may have connections in Washington which can speed up

the process. The rules on page 86 of the *Atomic Horror* sourcebook list some of the reaction modifiers to use in summoning military aid.

Capturing the Monster

If the PCs hope to save poor Calvin, they must capture him alive. This will be difficult, to put it mildly. Characters with the Gadeteer advantage may be able to



devise some form of tranquilizer bullet (a successful Physiology roll is needed to determine the proper dose for a dinosaur). A more brute-force approach might involve snaring the beast with strong cables. The Game Master should let the players devise their own plan, keeping in mind the limited supplies available in a remote small town like Ortonville.

Once Calvin is captured, he must be kept somehow. The party may want to keep the monster drugged; this runs the risk of killing it through overdose. Possibly the characters could improvise some sort of cage strong enough to contain an enraged dinosaur. There is also the problem of *feeding* the creature.

Complications

There are many ways for the Game Master to make the scenario more challenging. Perhaps a spring flood has cut off Ortonville from the outside world. In that case, the Army cannot be called in, and the player characters must work with whatever resources can be found in the town.

There may be more than one dinosaur – perhaps souvenir hunters have taken bone fragments. Or possibly a greedy local businessman has stolen some fragments to sell to collectors.

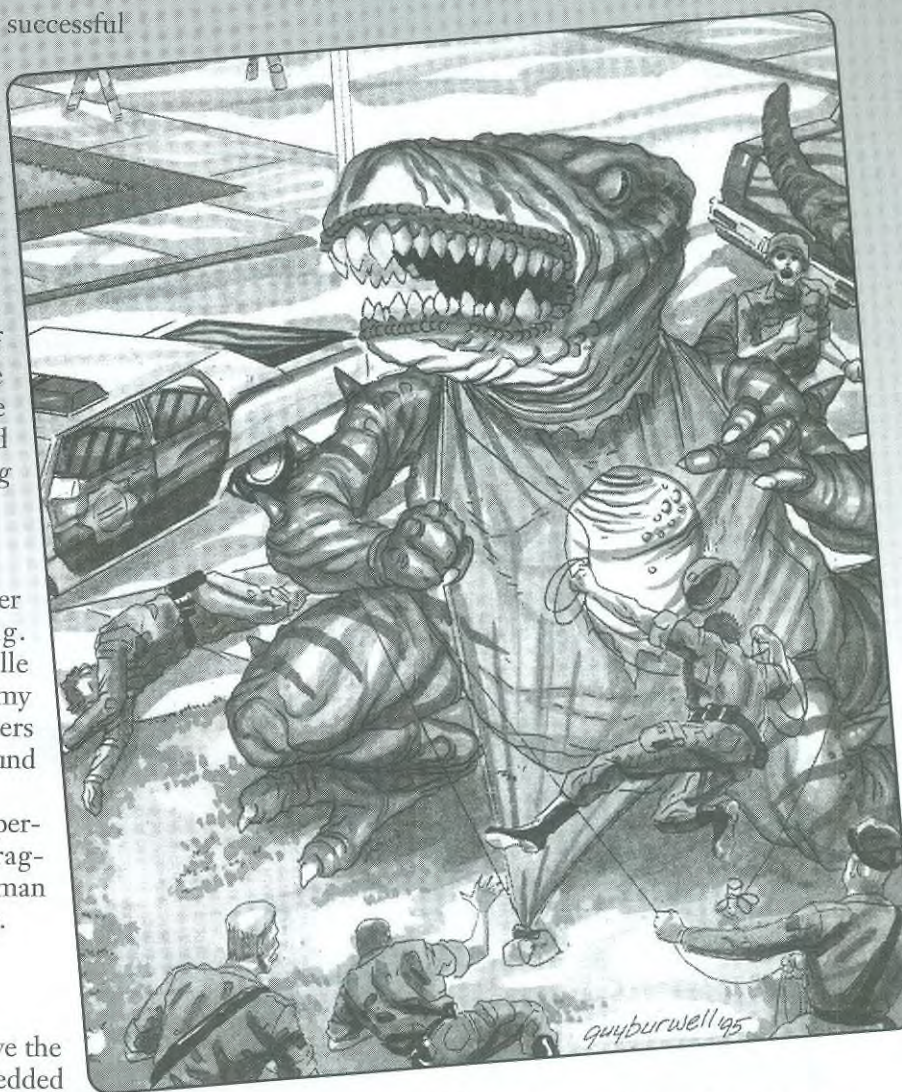
Saving Calvin

Finding a cure for Calvin is simple – remove the source of radiation from his body. The shredded remnants of his letter jacket are still clinging to the dinosaur's forelegs, with the radioactive dinosaur bone fragment in the lining. To discover this, the player characters must somehow get the truth from Claude Winston, or else get close enough to the monster with a Geiger counter to detect the radiation.

They must then come up with a way to get the jacket off of the dinosaur. A sharpshooter might be able to shoot it away, at a penalty of -7 on the shot. If the beast is in captivity, the jacket could be hooked off with a pole or grappling hook.

The Game Master may decide that with the radioactive bone removed, Calvin will slowly return to normal on his own. This is best if the player characters are not scientists and know little about reversing weird radiation effects.

Scientist characters can create a serum to cure Calvin, but it will require some research. At least one researcher must have Chemistry or Biochemistry-18 skill, and one must have Nuclear Physics-15. (Science! skill can substitute for any one missing skill.) Developing the serum requires a successful Chemistry or Biochemistry roll. Normally it would take 2 months to perfect the serum in a fully-equipped lab, but the scientists may be working desperately while a dinosaur tears up Ortonville. Creating the



serum without a university-quality lab means a -3 penalty to the researcher's skill. The time required may be halved, for a -2 penalty. This modifier may be applied cumulatively: -2 for 1 month of research; -4 for 2 weeks; -6 for 1 week, -8 for three days, and so on. Characters may further cut the time needed by working double shifts; this halves the time but requires a HT roll to avoid fatigue penalties.

Conclusion

If Calvin lives through the adventure, all will end happily (despite the carnage in Ortonville). Calvin's death will mean that the adventure should end on a somber note, warning that there are Some Things Man Was Not Meant To Know. Claude Winston should be punished somehow for his crime, or else should redeem himself by a heroic death.

When things finally return to normal, Professor Winston will resume work on the fossil, and in a few months he will invite the player characters to the unveiling of the complete Ortonosaurus skeleton at the Smithsonian (naturally the skeleton is a plaster cast; the real bones are in a lead vault).

Crossovers

"I Was A Teen-Age Dinosaur!" can be updated to the 1990s fairly easily – just replace all the doubletalk involving radiation with technobabble about DNA. So Professor Winston is not excavating a radioactive fossil, but instead is trying to extract dinosaur DNA from ordinary bones. Claude poisons Calvin with a sample of dinosaur DNA. Curing Calvin becomes a purely scientific problem. There may be a risk that others can be infected by the dinosaur DNA (a nice echo of the current fear of AIDS, to replace the earlier fear of the Bomb).

The monster's attack on Ortonville can be run as a *Car Wars* scenario (this is especially appropriate if one of the PCs is a teen-ager with a hot-rod). Using the *Car Wars* rules, the dinosaur moves at a top speed of 30 MPH; like a pedestrian it can make any maneuver without penalty. It has an armor value of 5 and 20 hit points. It occupies a counter as large as a normal automobile. All of its attacks are usable only against adjacent targets. Kick or tail attacks hit on a 9 or less and do 2 dice of damage. Vehicles hit by

replacing Professor Winston. The player characters could be Western gunfighters called in to deal with the strange monster. With little understanding of radiation, the PCs won't be able to cure Calvin, but may be able to remove the bone and hope that restores him to normal.

For *GURPS Supers*, the game master may wish to toughen up the dinosaur a little, perhaps by giving it a breath weapon (a la Godzilla) or else preternatural toughness. One or more supervillains might be in the area trying to steal Professor Winston's fossil, and could be responsible for Calvin's transformation.

Sheriff Trent Johnson

Age 35; 6'3"; 175 lbs.; dark brown hair and brown eyes.

ST: 12 [20] **IQ:** 12 [20] **Speed:** 6

DX: 12 [20] **HT:** 12 [20] **Move:** 6

Damage: *Thrust* 1d-1; *Swing* 1d+2

Dodge: 6 **Parry:** 8 (Brawling)

No armor; no encumbrance.

Point Total: 100

Advantages

Combat Reflexes [15]
Law Enforcement Powers [5]
Status +1 (Local Official) [5]

Disadvantages

Duty (as Sheriff) [-15]
Honesty [-10]
Intolerance of foreigners [-5]

Quirks

Chews Tobacco [-1]
Dislikes Outside Interference [-1]
Doesn't Believe Weird Stories [-1]
Suspicious of Teenagers [-1]

Skills

Area Knowledge (Ortonville Area)-15 [6];
Brawling-12 [1]; Criminology-11 [1]; Detect Lies
-10 [1]; Driving (Stock Cars)-11 [1]; First Aid-12
[1]; Forensics-10 [1]; Guns (Pistol)-14 [1];
Interrogation-12 [2]; Law-11 [2]; Leadership-11
[1]; Mechanic (Gas Engines)-10 [1]; Parachuting
-11 [1]; Politics-10 [1]; Riding-11 [1]; Shortsword
-11 [1]; Telegraphy-11 [1]; Throwing-11 [1];
Tracking-13 [4].

Weapon

Smith & Wesson M10, 2d-1 crushing.

Order and justice in Ortonville are the responsibility of Sheriff Trent Johnson. Johnson is a tough, no-nonsense man, a veteran of D-Day and Bastogne. The sheriff is good at his job, and seldom if ever has to use violence to keep the peace. Johnson dislikes being told his job by outsiders, and his wartime experiences have left him deeply suspicious of all foreigners. He won't believe any nonsense about dinosaurs until he sees one. He will.



the dinosaur are automatically moved 1/4" away. Bite attacks hit on a 10 or less and do 1 die of damage. The citizens of Ortonville are only armed with hand weapons. They have a good supply of unarmed and unarmed cars.

Alternatively, the whole thing could take place in the 1880s, with a scientist like O.C. Marsh or E.D. Cope

Professor Jerome Winston

Age 48; 5'11"; 160 lbs.; gray hair and green eyes.

ST: 10 [0] **IQ:** 16 [80] **Speed:** 4.25

DX: 7 [-20] **HT:** 10 [0] **Move:** 4

Damage: *Thrust* 1d-2; *Swing* 1d

Dodge: 4

No armor; no encumbrance

Point Total: 100

Advantages

Reputation
(well-respected
geologist, +2
among scien-
tists) [5]

Status
(Respected
Professor, +1) [5]
Comfortable [10]

Disadvantages

Absent-
Mindedness [-15]
Bad Sight
(corrected) [-10]
Pacifism
(self-defense) [-15]

Quirks

Never Admits He
Is Wrong [-1]
Rationalist [-1]
Tends to Lecture
[-1]
Smokes Foul-
Smelling Pipe [-1]
Snappy Dresser [-1]

Skills

Area Knowledge
(Rocky Mountains)-
16 [1]; Astronomy-15
[2]; Chemistry-17
[6]; Climbing-9 [8];
Engineer (Mining)-14
[1]; Geology-21 [14]; Mathematics-15 [2]; Metallurgy-15
[2]; Photography-15 [1]; Physics-15 [2]; Research-16 [2];
Riding-9 [8]; Science!-15 [4]; Survival (Mountains)-15 [1]
Teaching-16 [2]; Zoology-15 [2].

Languages

German-17 [4]; Latin-16 [2]; Spanish-15 [1].

Professor Jerome Winston is one of the nation's best-respected geologists. He is an expert on fossils and their formation. He has made a good living consulting with mining companies, and has an unmatched familiarity with the Rocky Mountains. Professor Winston is a pleasant, if vague man, who enjoys the outdoors. He is a peaceful person who has never struck a blow in anger.

Susan Parker

Age 16; 5'7"; 135 lbs.; blonde hair and blue eyes.

ST: 9 [-10] **IQ:** 12 [20] **Speed:** 6.5

DX: 14 [45] **HT:** 9 [-10] **Move:** 6

Damage: *Thrust* 1d-2; *Swing* 1d-1

Dodge: 6

No armor; no encumbrance

Point Total: 50

Advantages

Animal Empathy [5]
Beautiful (+2/+4) [15]

Disadvantages

Impulsiveness [-10]
Pacifism (self-defense) [-15]
Youth (age 16) [-4]

Quirks

Constantly Adopts Animals [-1]
Prefers Wearing Pants [-1]

Skills

Area Knowledge (Ortonville and environs)-14 [4]; Climbing-13 [1]; Cooking-12 [1]; Dancing-13 [1]; First Aid-12 [1]; Naturalist-12 [4]; Riding-17 [1]; Zoology-11 [2].

Languages

Spanish-11 [1].

Susan Parker is the daughter of Ortonville's pharmacist. She is a healthy, tomboyish girl who loves animals of every type. Susan is one of the best students at Ortonville High School, with particularly good marks in biology. When Professor Winston asked for volunteers to help excavate the fossil, she jumped at the

chance to work with a real scientist. Susan loves to ride in the mountains around Ortonville, and knows the area very well. She also has the normal interests for a girl her age: movies, music, boys and parties.

Claude Winston

Age 16; 5'6"; 150 lbs.; brown hair and green eyes.

ST: 11 [10] **IQ:** 13 [30] **Speed:** 5

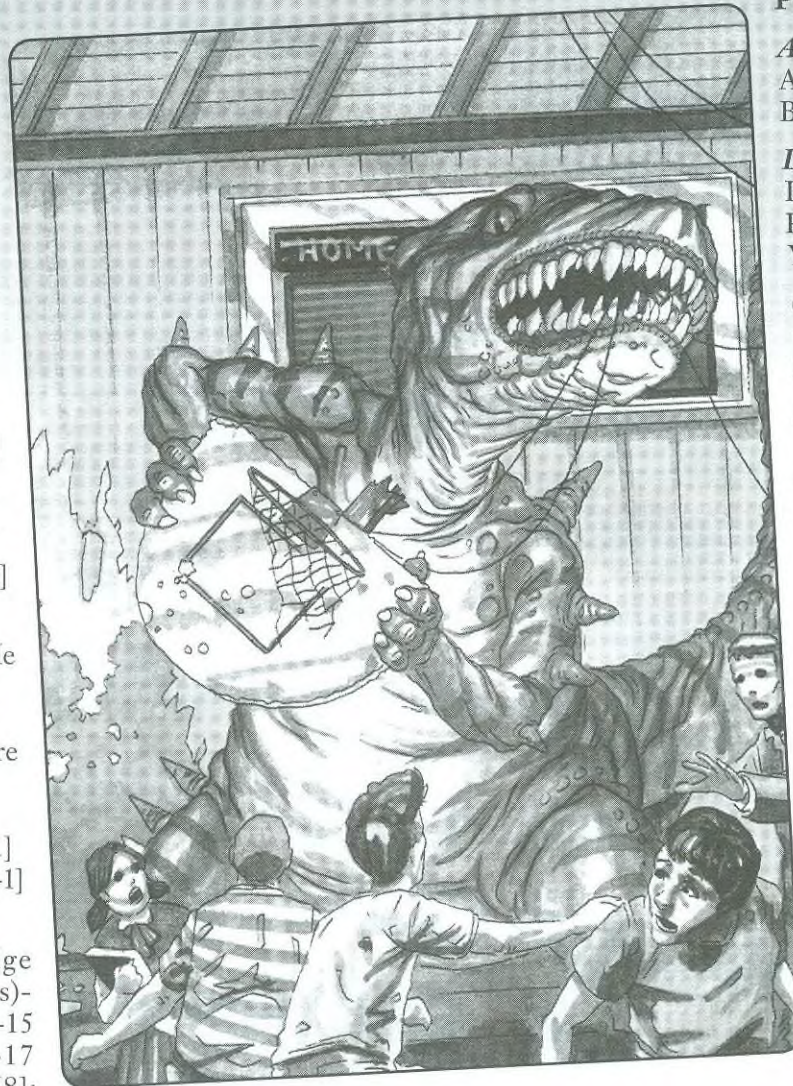
DX: 10 [0] **HT:** 10 [0] **Move:** 5

Damage: *Thrust* 1d-1; *Swing* 1d+1

Dodge: 5

No armor; no encumbrance.

Point Total: 50



Advantages

Mathematical Ability [10]
Wealthy [20]

Disadvantages

Bad Sight (Corrected) [-10]
Bad Temper [-10]
Jealousy [-10]
Unattractive -1 [-5]
Youth (age 16) [-4]

Quirks

Annoying Laugh [-1]
Brags About Wealth [-1]

Skills

Astronomy-11 [1]; Chemistry-11 [1]; Electronics (Radio)-12 [2] Electronics Operation (Radios)-13 [2] Mathematics-15 [2]; Nuclear Physics-11 [2]; Physics-15 [8]; Skiing-9 [2].

Languages

French-12 [1].

Claude Winston is the son of Professor Winston's younger brother. Claude's father is a successful electronics executive, and the family is very wealthy. Young Claude has been given anything and everything he might want – except perhaps affection. He is undeniably intelligent, and has the makings of a good scientist or engineer. But his personality repels many people, and he is prone to temper tantrums. Claude has recently become infatuated with Susan Parker. She is still unaware of this, as all her attention is focused on Calvin Barnard. Claude has decided to do something about his rival.

Calvin Barnard

Age 17; 6'2"; 190 lbs.; blond hair and gray eyes.

ST: 11 [10] **IQ:** 12 [20] **Speed:** 5.5

DX: 12 [20] **HT:** 11 [10] **Move:** 5

Damage: *Thrust* 1d-1; *Swing* 1d+1

Dodge: 5

No armor; no encumbrance.

Point Total: 50

Advantages

Attractive (+1) [5]

Disadvantages

Code of Honor (High-School) [-10]
Honesty [-10]
Struggling [-10]
Youth (age 17) [-2]

Quirks

Tongue-Tied Around Attractive Girls [-1]
Wears Letter Jacket Everywhere [-1]

Skills

Anthropology-11 [2]; Archaeology-10 [1]; Area Knowledge (Ortonville and environs)-12 [1]; Baseball-13 [4]; Climbing-11 [1]; Driving (Stock cars)-11 [1]; Fishing-12 [1]; Geology-11 [2]; Guitar-9 [1/2]; Guns (Rifle)-14 [1]; Lasso-11 [1]; Mechanic (Gasoline Engines)-11 [1]; Riding-11 [1]; Singing-9 [1/2]; Survival (Mountains)-11 [1].

Calvin Barnard lives with his mother on the family's failing ranch outside Ortonville. His father died at Iwo Jima. Calvin is a busy young man: when he's not helping work the ranch, he is busy studying about ancient cultures and buried civilizations. Somehow he finds time to be a star of the Ortonville High baseball team, and to play in a local rock-and-roll band (Jerry and the Jukesters). When Calvin heard that Professor Winston wanted help excavating the fossil, he thought it would be a great opportunity to learn something about scientific field work. Calvin is a nice boy, though a trifle shy around girls. He sometimes has trouble balancing his own sense of responsibility against the traditional code of high-school behavior.

The Calvin-Monster

This is the intermediate form between Calvin's normal human body and the final dinosaur stage. The creature still has some of Calvin's human intelligence, but its personality is entirely dominated by the dinosaur's thoughts. It looks more reptilian than human, and stands 12 feet tall. The creature has a long tail, claws and a terrifying set of teeth. The Calvin-monster has greyish-purple scales which act as armor. It has the Night Vision advantage.

ST: 40

DX: 13

IQ: 8

HT: 12/40

Move/Dodge: 7/7

PD/DR: 2/2

Damage: 2d cutting or 7d-1 crushing

Reach: C, 1

Size: 2 hexes

Wt: 1 ton

The Calvin-Dinosaur

In his final form, Calvin becomes a giant Ortonosaurus. The creature is not a realistic dinosaur, but an atom-spawned movie monster. It stands nearly 40 feet tall when fully erect, but usually walks bent forward from the hips. The dinosaur has enormous jagged teeth, clawed feet, and a long muscular tail. Its color shades from dark purple along the back, through gray along the sides, to green on the underbelly. It has the Night Vision and Peripheral Vision advantages. The beast has little trace of Calvin's human intellect; it is a prehistoric predator.

ST: 150

DX: 15

IQ: 4

HT: 15/70

Move/Dodge: 20/10

PD/DR: 4/4

Damage: 7d+2 impaling, 18d crushing

Reach: C, 3

Size: 20 hexes

Wt: 6 tons

GOBLINS

AN ADVENTURE IN THE GUTTER

FOR *GURPS GOBLINS*
by Malcolm Dale and Klaude Thomas

The Low Lodging House

"When a man's lost caste in society, he may as well go the whole hog, bristles and all, and a low lodging house is the entire pig."

What part it plays in the life of the characters.

For characters starting out in the Gutter, the low lodging house at No. 20 Ashestree Court (or some place similar) is the only place which the characters call "home," and the only place in which at least one character has ever lived, so far as he can remember. Here they have been educated in every facet of low life, from birth to death and beyond. The greasy, scrofulous inhabitants come and go, but fellow inhabitants of the house make an effort to help another out of difficulties (for a fee or favour, of course), where they would have kicked a stranger while he or she was down.

Physical description

The house at No. 20 is four stories in height, including the ground floor and the garret, ten feet wide across the front, and 20 feet long from the front door to the back wall.

The front of the house is ornamented by a door, four windows (one on each floor) and a drainpipe. The pipe distinguishes it from the other houses in the row, which don't have one. It is perfectly strong enough to climb, with convenient brackets at regular intervals, put there by Rough Bob for just that purpose. There are no windows in the back wall, which abuts directly against the house behind. The ground floor has an impressively high ceiling – 12 feet high. The stories above become progressively lower, so that the garret (directly under the peaked roof) is less than six feet high even in the middle.

There is one large chimney (18 by 9 inches), with a fire-place joining it at every story.

The Inhabitants

Ground Floor

the Player Characters

Second Floor

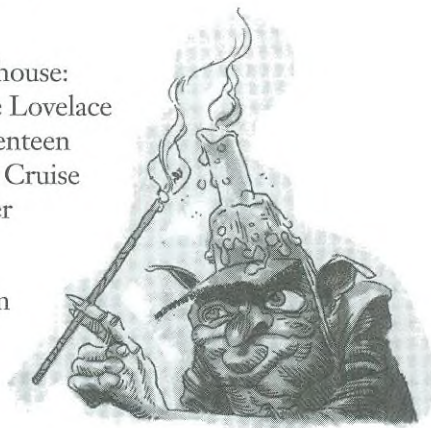
the ladies of the house:
Ms Chaste Lovelace
Grace Valenteen
Mr Moses Cruise
Lust Bloodgusher

Third Floor

Provocation Lum
Rough Bob

The Garret

Doctor Rudd



Doctor Rudd's Elixir of Vitality

Characters

Doctor Rudd (Burglar, Status -2)

ST 6, DX 11, IQ 7, HT 14, Co 6

Basic Speed 6.25, Move 6

Dodge 6, Parry 8 (Brawling).

Advantages: Handsome, Strong Will +2.

Disadvantages: Fat, Scotophobia.

Quirks: Throws things when even slightly irritated; very forgetful.

Skills: Alchemy-9, Animal Handling-9,
Lockpicking/TL5-15, Brawling-12, Climbing-15,
Starglazing-14, Stealth-14, Traps-9.

No weapons, Basic Damage: Thrust 1d-4, Swing 1d-4.

A burglar, who chose the name Doctor because he thought it might make him seem more respectable. He was quite correct, and to this day most of the inhabitants of the house believe that Doctor Rudd has some kind of medical experience. He is short but enormously fat, which only adds to his reputation, and is rather handsome, which does not hurt. He would have obtained some kind of medical qualification as a youth, but indulged too early in crude chemical experiments, which permanently impaired both his short term and his long term memory, and had him thrown out of school. From there he took up a career in burglary, at which he has been modestly successful, having been transported only once. On his return, he has resumed his alchemic experimentation, and created a number of substances with which he is very pleased.

Goblin Luck

Using the Heracles elixir also causes a chance of turning into a werewolf. The GM makes an obvious but secret roll for this. On a 17 or 18 the person becomes a werewolf for one hour (see *Werewolf* in *GURPS Magic*, p. 110). The GM briefly plays the afflicted creature, rushing it out into the street and off into the distance, say two or three blocks. Any obstacles to this course of action are treated as hostile. At this point, the player regains control of his character for about 5 minutes of game time. He then blanks out again, and the GM again plays the character briefly, doing whatever seems most exciting. In total, the character will remain in wolf form for an hour, during which time he will also be under all of the other effects of the elixir. Doctor Rudd is unaware of this effect, even though he has undergone it several times.

Rose Gutter (Gypsy Queen, Status -2)

ST 13, DX 11, IQ 13, HT 8, Co 13

Basic Speed 4.75, Move 4

Dodge 4, Parry 10 (Brawling).

Advantages: Magery 2, Musical Ability +5.

Disadvantages: Brachial Traumatophobia, Overconfidence.

Skills: Alchemy-15, Brawling-16, Carousing-11, Gambling-20, Surgery-16.

Spells: one spell at 17.

No weapons, Basic Damage: Thrust 1d, Swing 2d-1.

A big, bold lady skilled in many and various arts, who works during the day as an apothecarist.

Background

– By accident, Doctor Rudd has discovered a formula for making an Elixir of Heracles (p. M100). The impurity of the elixir is such that any user becomes prone to the Berserk disadvantage for the duration of its effect, i.e. one hour.

– Doctor Rudd has his elixir made up for him by an apothecarist, Rose Gutter, at a cost of 4 pounds, around the corner on Primrose Hill. The last ingredient he adds himself, to preserve the formula's secret. Unfortunately, the secret ingredient is mineral turpentine, which can easily be detected on his breath.

Hooks

– Provocation Lum (p. GB126) is violently ill and gives Doctor Rudd 6s to procure some medicine. Doctor Rudd instantly sees this as an opportunity to instead purchase some elixir for his own consumption. In a flash of inspiration, he decides to send the characters, with 4s as a deposit and 2s for themselves when they return, to Rose Gutter to

procure the elixir. He will then fill a bottle with some other fluid and give it to Provocation as medicine, and accuse the characters of doing it if Provocation notices.

– If the characters order the elixir, it will become obvious that its manufacture is magical in nature. Rose mixes a powder, takes the 4s and gives the players the jar, with a folded note addressed to Rudd asking for the balance of the 4 pounds no later than a week hence.

– If the characters return with the powder, Rudd takes it and gives the players a small bottle of yellowish fluid labeled Dr Plant's Grand Elixir, in ink not quite dry, to give to Provocation. Some time later, Rudd rushes downstairs and out into the street, his cheeks glowing with vitality and a strong scent of turpentine wafting behind him.

Challenges

– To resist the temptation to spend Rudd's 4s on something else. Failure here incurs the wrath of Rudd, and Provocation.

– To find out the method for producing the elixir, either for sale to an apothecarist (Rose doesn't know the secret ingredient, so can be included in this group), or for personal use and production.

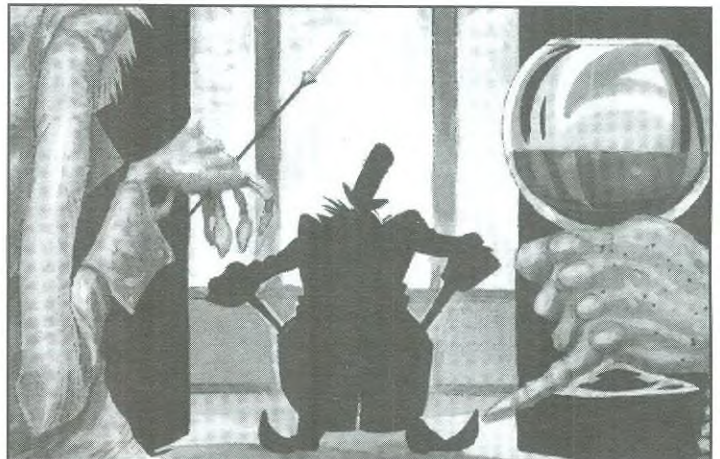
Rewards and Consequences

– The PCs may be able to sell the elixir, or the formula, if they can convince anyone that it is genuine. It is far more likely that they will turn down the PCs and then try to steal it later.

– Alternatively, the PCs could buy the powder from Rose (possibly with a deposit and a charge on Rudd's account), and then mix the elixir themselves.

– Letting the elixir loose in London could have an extremely dramatic outcome, with werewolves (see *Goblin Luck*, above) and berserkers rushing around in the streets.

– Other than that, Rudd may become suspicious if his deal with Rose suddenly changes, or if his account suddenly increases. This might lead to him hiring the characters to steal back the rest of the formula.



– If the players suddenly start showing the effects of using the elixir, then Rudd is likely to want to know why.

– If a character turns into a werewolf, the GM will need to improvise. One day, Rudd is going to turn up as a werewolf, too.

Character Points: 1 for making off with Rudd's 4s and getting away with it; 2 for getting the formula to make Rudd's elixir; plus any bonus points the GM deems appropriate.

☛ Further Player Motivators

– Getting into the business of alchemy in general, and in using or selling the elixir.

Rudd's Rook

The garret is a tiny room with a steeply-pitched ceiling and a single dormer window at the front. At the back a small section is walled off, forming a little wedge of space which has a triangular door at each side. These doors each communicate with a similar space in the house on either side, which in turn communicate with the next houses, and so on along the length of Ashestree Court. This passage is too awkward to be commonly used, but has proven valuable in emergencies. Doctor Rudd has filled the garret with books, which lie in irregular drifts and piles, arranged to form his table, chair, candlestick and, with a blanket stretched on top, his bed. As he reads his way through them the piles shift and change, and Doctor Rudd's furniture shifts and changes with them, growing nearer to the window in summer, and nearer to the fire in winter. A particular stack has been carefully arranged into shelves, and on these are displayed a wide variety of bottles and jars, many of them empty, but a lot containing various powders, liquids and preserved specimens. He has no wardrobe, possessing only the clothes he stands up in.

Mr Rudd wears a long white frock-coat, which he has personalised in time-honoured medical fashion, by wiping his hands on the sides after every operation. Of course, Mr Rudd has never actually performed any operations at all, but managed to produce a very convincing simulation by working at a slaughterhouse during his seven-year visit to Australia. He wears tight grey trousers, and unremarkable shoes. His shirt is rather nice, with a high, starched collar and very long cuffs, from which only the tips of his fingers extend.

Rose Gutter's Apothecary

Ms Gutter's Apothecary is found in Primrose Hill, almost opposite the back of the Magpie Tavern. It comprises a modest room with a window opening onto the street. The window has a strong wooden shutter, which can be lowered and laid across the sill, to form a

counter. Customers stand outside in the street, doing business through the window and nimbly dodging the passing traffic, or the occasional stream of effluent and low humour from the coarse folk in the rooms above.

Ms Gutter wears a cheap cotton shawl over a cheap cotton dress, bulked out with cheap cotton petticoats underneath, with a pair of rather fine black leather boots. She also has an earring. Her attire has a slightly foreign look, as does Rose herself, and for this reason her friends don't quite trust her. She doesn't much care for them either. She has 8 pence, knotted in an end of her shawl, and several shillings in a tin box at the back of the room.



Rudd's Elixir

In its raw form, the elixir comprises a pale yellow, coarse-grained powder, which glitters in the light. Once the secret final ingredient has been added, it transforms into a vivid green liquid with a pale sediment at the bottom.

The process of manufacture is:

1. Rose carefully unlocks a small but heavily ornamented wooden cabinet, with a key she wears on a string around her neck.

2. She then draws forth a small black leather book and turns its onionskin pages. Reading from it, she grinds together a powder of several ingredients taken from tiny glass bottles, one of which is nearly empty.

3. Finally, Rose says a few words in Italian over the powder, and seals it in a little jar.

Rudd's own contribution is to pour in the final ingredient – mineral turpentine – and swig the lot.

The elixir is worth 4 pounds a dose, if anyone can be convinced that it works. An apothecarist would buy the formula for about ten times that if he could afford it, and if he can be convinced that it is the real thing.



Gentleman Johnson's FISH MART

By Ed Wisniowski

London has many boweries and neighborhoods. In any of them an aspiring goblin can find an opportunity to succeed. This *GURPS Goblines* adventure is for beginning goblins as they make their first efforts to find wealth and happiness, or at least escape the Gutter, in Rigg Quarter.

Rigg Quarter

Just over the Waterloo bridge in the unfashionable section of London's east end is Rigg Quarter. The quarter is a mixed community covering about two square blocks and facing northward toward the Thames river. The people of the quarter always hope for a way to cross over the bridge, but the harsh realities of goblin life get in the way. The primary population of the quarter are marines from his majesty's artillery regiment, with Proles littering the streets. This is the obvious handiwork of the troops and their presence. The economy revolves around three individuals.

Gentleman Johnson, who runs a fish mart catering to the leisured gentefolk and aristocracy across the bridge, is the primary employer. To work for Johnson is a great honor and a fast way to improve your status. Johnson's rival is his old public school classmate Righteous Dagon Dragbottom. He runs the local pawn shop and the entire underground economy in the quarter. Dragbottom is always willing to be your friend for a cost. Many in the quarter call him crude and unseemly. Unfortunately, that does

not stop people from using the pawn broker's services for questionable activity. Finally, Col. Egizial Conelly is the commander of the marine barracks. Not only does he keep his men in top fighting shape, he also makes sure that Johnson and Dragbottom's sparring doesn't break out into open fighting in the streets. After all, he is a gentleman and has an entire regiment of marines with rifles and cannons to keep the peace.

People in the quarter work for Dragbottom or Johnson,



or enlist to become marines. Anyone else either winds up in the Gutter or escapes to become famous and wealthy. Other features in the quarter include four major night spots for the residents. The Bloody Bucket is usually reserved for working people and gutter trash. Marines are under strict orders to stay out of this establishment. Instead, they are welcomed at a place called the Eagle Claw, which is much more respectable and owned by the former first sergeant of the regiment. Marines and working people rub elbows and make plans for the future at the Claw. Officers and gentefolk expect outstanding service from Jezebel's Social Club, where a card game can last all night and the blood pudding always tastes better with a spot of gin. Finally, there is the Twilight Slumbers Hotel. Marines on leave always make a stop here to soothe their frayed nerves and enjoy the company of a "proper lady." In spite of its scandalous reputation, the women of the quarter tolerate its presence because it prevents harassment by King George's uncouth marines.

With Johnson closest to the bridge on the west side of the quarter and Dragbottom across from him on the east, scattered between them are the rooming houses, flats and slums that make up a majority of the quarter. The Marine barracks and the more upscale housing is in the southern section near the top of a large hill. Both Johnson and Dragbottom, along with the marines, live here. Each morning at six, the barracks has taps and the rest of the quarter awakens. The marines will get moving about nine-thirty once the hangovers wear off. At noon six days a week, the Colonel has a parade down the main street of the quarter. The climax is a 500-pound brass cannon ridden down the hill by a crew of adventurous artilleryists and fired into the Thames. Life in Rigg Quarter may be squalid, but it is certainly not boring.

What Is Going On?

Johnson, over the years, has been cultivating contacts with the upper classes and overcharging them for seafood. Now, he is prepared to take the final step into the aristocracy with a knighthood and a plot of land outside the city. Naturally, this makes Dragbottom furious, and he will do everything he can to foil his old rival's plans. The problem is that a recent jewel theft by one of Dragbottom's henchmen has gone terribly wrong and he has been forced to behave himself. In the meantime, the unscrupulous pawn shop owner has been hiding jewels in the one place no one cares to look – in Johnson's smelly fish warehouse.

Johnson has discovered this and has decided to use the loot for himself to bribe his way into a knighthood. This is where the players' goblins come in. Since they will be unemployed and easily influenced, Johnson will hire them as delivery people. They will deliver a load of fish to a snotty aristocrat who will find the jewels and a note stating Johnson's intentions. The bribe should work and Johnson will become a knight in less than a fortnight. Considering goblin luck, Johnson and the delivery boys will lose a little sleep before that happens.

Mustering Day

September 1st is always a special day in Rigg Quarter, because all of the trade guilds graduate their apprentices from service and the enlistments all expire from Marine regiment. Col. Conelly grants leave to most of the

marines at the barracks and a huge drunken party ensues at the Eagle Claw as comrades in arms say good-bye to each other. The apprentices also begin looking for work that isn't there. By the end of this night, the discouraged workers wind up in the Eagle Claw drinking to forget their dismal prospects. This is an ideal chance to get the PC goblins together and introduce them to Rigg Quarter. If they were once servants, none of the gentlefolk or aristocracy will hire them. Former soldiers or marines will be ignored by potential employers. Even pickpockets and rat catchers will find employment opportunities lacking.

As the unemployed goblins get more drunk (pp. GB100-4), they should realize they don't have a place to sleep for the night. The Twilight Slumbers has no vacancy and they could not afford the four shilling a night rent. The rooming houses are full and most landlords will turn the wretches away because they are drunk.

This is when the PCs should get a good look at Dragbottom and his men. Stumbling back from a tenebment to the bar, they witness an ugly incident. Four goblins are holding down a victim while a rumpled,

blue-skinned goblin in fine clothes begins heating up a bucket of pitch.

"So, Amos," asks the blue-skinned Goblin, "why don't I have the jewels yet?"

"Honest, Dragbottom," says the helpless goblin, "I left them in the warehouse like you said and they're gone!"

"I hate people that lie," says the fellow mixing the molten pitch, "and I really hate people that muck things up."

"Please Dragbottom, I'll get the jewels in a week."

"You'd better, or I might do something really bad. Turn him over."

With that, the four thugs roll over the poor victim and the blue-

skinned goblin paints his behind with the pitch. Once they are finished, they throw the poor soul into the river and walk away. If the witnessing goblins are smart, they will try to get away without being noticed.

If they are noticed, Dragbottom gives them enough shillings to find room and board for the night and a bottle of gin to keep quiet. Goblin luck will smile favorably on them regardless, because a drunken goblin will pass out on the street in front of the group; he will have enough money on him to pay room and board for the night.



At the Eagle Claw

The next day, the PCs are very hung over and suffering mightily. Making matters worse, there isn't any work. Since it is the day after mustering day, the citizens of the quarter are a lot less understanding of homeless laborers pestering them for jobs. If our heroes get too eager looking for work, someone will call the constable to chase them away. Dragbottom isn't working at the pawn shop today, and if the goblins want to see him they will be flatly refused. Further inquiries will result in the nosy ones being beaten up by Dragbottom's thugs, who love whacking unemployed Gutter scum. All roads lead back to the Eagle Claw and a chance to drown their sorrows.

At the Eagle Claw, they recognize a familiar figure. It is the goblin that passed out the night before in front of them. Talking with the bartender will reveal that he is Gentleman Johnson's footman – Peter "Lightweight" Rumbub. The suffering goblin has a very bad hangover and is trying to enjoy a meal with little success. He turns a bloodshot eye in the direction of the PCs and calls them over.

"I say," he says, "You're those chaps that helped me last night. Join me for some dinner, won't you?"

As the name implies, Rumbub is not a very good drinker, but the goblins find out that he does indeed work for Johnson. Since he thinks they helped him last night, Rumbub will help them find work in the fish market and buy them dinner. The evening soon turns into a small feast for the goblins (who haven't eaten all day), and the future looks much brighter. After dinner and several pints of beer, they notice another goblin walk into the Eagle Claw. His bottom is covered in pitch and he has two small thugs at his side. His attitude is about as bad as his appearance as the others in the pub begin to laugh at his misfortune.

Rumbub finishes his ale and jokes, "That's Dragbottom's best thief, Sneaky Amos Cutbirth. Stay away from him. He doesn't look like much but he's plenty mean."

When someone from the group fetches a round of drinks (or if some other excuse presents itself), he bumps into Cutbirth, spilling his beer. Cutbirth, who has already had a bad 24 hours, throws a tantrum and threatens the PC goblins. "Look at my coat," he says "You ruined it!" Apologizing will only make him angrier.

Instead of whacking the offending street scum and his companions, Cutbirth challenges him to a friendly wager to pay for the cleaning. The game is conkers, and the rest of the pub starts taking side bets on the game. The bartender produces two walnuts and some yarn. The rules are simple – the players drill a hole in the walnuts and then thread the yarn through the hole. After that is done, the participants beat their opponents over the heads with the makeshift flail until one of the nuts breaks. It is a simple contest that is very entertaining for those who watch. For the participants, it can be a little painful.

Treat a conker as a small flail that does Swing +1 damage. Each conker has a DR of 4 and 5 hit points. Once a conker takes more damage than hit points, it shatters and that player loses. A roasted conker has a DR of 6. Treat the game as a normal combat with each blow landing on the opponent's head and don't forget to figure in the DR of 2 for goblin skulls. On a critical success, roll on the critical head blow table. Killing a foe playing conkers is very unsporting, but knocking him out usually forces the opponent to forfeit the match. Only three people this year have been hanged for killing someone playing conkers, so the goblins have that going for them.

If the PC goblin wins, they collect about six shillings from Cutbirth and two rounds of drinks from other patrons in the bar that won side bets. If he loses, Rumbub will give Cutbirth the money to clean his clothes.

No matter what the outcome of the match, Rumbub is impressed and takes the player and his colleagues to see Johnson that same evening.

An Offer You Can't Refuse

Compared with the smoky and dark surroundings of the Claw, Jezebel's Social Club is heaven on earth. The parlor is well lit. The women are dressed in the latest fashions. Everyone has bathed and the club has a huge buffet with a wide selection of deserts. Best of all, the food is free! Unfortunately, everything else has a steep price. The card tables are filled with leisured gentlefolk gambling their fortunes away. Respectable women are providing necessary escort service and the drink prices would make the ordinary goblin on the street nauseous. This is how the better half lives and the



PCs are homeless, hungry, drunk, and sore if coming out of the conkers match. Normally, Gutter folk like them would not even be allowed near the front door of an establishment like Jezebel's. The doorman to the club and the valet sniff in disgust as they are escorted inside. Only Rumbub's presence prevents them from being thrown out on the street like trash. Rumbub leaves his guests at the bar while he gets his master out of the poker room.

After a brief wait or a round of outrageously priced drinks, Johnson walks up. He is a green, warty fellow with a nose that looks like it has been broken a few times during childhood rugby games. "My footman tells me you played conkers with Cutbirth and didn't get killed," he says.

Now it is up to the goblins to beg Johnson for a job. Rumbub won't speak any more for the goblins. Fast-Talk and Bard will help sway Johnson. Considering that Johnson is winning at the poker tables and is in a good mood, they receive an additional +2 bonus to their roll. If they are successful, Johnson will pay for their bar tab, hire them on the spot and put them up for the night. If they fail, Johnson has them thrown out of the club and they are forced to fend for themselves. All is not lost, though, if the characters are forced to spend the night in the streets; Rumbub gives them his card and tells them to try again tomorrow at the fish mart. Johnson will be sober and might be a little more receptive. Either way, the unfortunate souls are free to steal some food from the buffet so they will not go hungry for the night.

The Fish Mart

Depending on how the meeting with Johnson went the night before, the goblins either wake up in the rooming house across the street from the fish mart, or they find themselves outside the gates with the other Gutter folk, looking for work. What both experiences have in common is that the market gives off an unhealthy stench that would make even the healthiest goblin want to give up his breakfast. Most of the people who work at the market have lost their sense of smell and consider it a blessing, as barges bring putrid crates of fish to the warehouse to be processed, iced and shipped to the upper classes.

Johnson's market does not open to the public until 10:30, but work begins at 8:00 and Johnson arrives at 9:30 to oversee his operations. If the PC goblins are hired they will be let into the gates and given basic training on how to drive a coach and deliver fish. If they are still unemployed, they are let in by Rumbub who presents them to his master one final time. Johnson is impressed by their pluck (or stupidity) and has a perfect job for them. They are to deliver a load of fish to Lord Carpetbagger by 12:30. He lives on the west end and hates late shipments. If they don't get the shipment to Carpetbagger's on time, he will fire them and make sure that no one in Rigg Quarter will ever hire them for legitimate work. It is an offer they can't refuse, unless they enjoy living in the Gutter poor and penniless. The new hires are given a map and written instructions on how to



get to Carpetbagger's. Since most goblins are illiterate, it should be fun trying to understand them. The two-horse carriage holds three crates of fish and has enough room for the party.

Getting over the Waterloo bridge should be a challenge, and then negotiating the streets of London's west end should also be difficult. It will take a combination of a successful Navigation or Area Knowledge roll to find Carpetbagger's place. The PCs receive an additional +2 if one of them can read and understand the map. Due to goblin jingoism, they would normally be at a -4 to do anything outside Rigg Quarter. Since they are working for Johnson, all of their rolls are made at even up.

Once the navigation roll is made, they next have to make a successful roll against Riding or Teamster to make sure the cart is traveling fast enough to make it to Carpetbagger's. A failed result will mean that they have violated the traffic laws and answer to the police, or worse: the horses will run wild and take the carriage on a frantic ride through the streets, resulting in an accident spilling goblins and fish all over the street. Time is precious and the clock is ticking. What they do not know is that Cutbirth is planing an ambush for them. They also have over 10,000 pounds' worth of diamonds hidden inside the belly of a large tuna in one of the crates.

The Ambush

As the delivery carriage makes a turn into a narrow alley, an apple cart is pushed into the middle of the road blocking the way. A simple Riding roll is all it takes to avoid the collision. If the carriage's driver fails and hits the apple cart, Cutbirth and his goblins will attack. If he avoids the obstacle, Cutbirth and his gang will jump from roof tops onto the speeding fish delivery. The ambushers are armed with clubs and ice picks. All they really want is the fish. Whacking the delivery boys is a bonus. The PCs are outnumbered three to two and only have improvised weapons. The fight should still be interesting, with plenty of dirty tricks and pratfalls. GMs are encouraged to award extra character points for especially dirty tricks or theatrical fight moves. The fight climaxes with the arrival of the local police, who chase off the attackers. Time their appearance so that they're just a hair too late – the ambush should succeed and Cutbirth make off with the jewels. The police will return the battered carriage to Johnson and the fish mart.

Confronted with his plan's failure, Johnson will be very upset. He will be so angry that he will start whacking the PCs with his walking cane right in front of the constables. Since he is in a position of authority, all the guttertrash goblins can do is take a few more lumps. Once the swelling stops and Johnson calms down, it is time to weigh options – and none of them are very good.

Decisions, Decisions

A messenger from Dragbottom will arrive at the fish market at about the same time that Johnson gets done wielding his cane. The unscrupulous pawn-shop owner always enjoys getting maximum profit from all of his ventures, so he is willing to sell back the jewels at twice the cost a fence would offer him. Johnson can still make the bribe and earn his title, but Dragbottom would get a cut of the booty. Johnson is furious, but he is not stupid. He tells the messenger to set up a time after the market closes so that the money and jewels can be exchanged. He has no intention of honoring the deal.

"You miserable trash have a chance to redeem yourselves," he says. "When Dragbottom and his men arrive you will whack them, take back the jewels, and paint pitch on that scoundrel's bottom and throw him in the river."

Faced with starvation and homelessness, the goblins have no choice but to be part of Johnson's plan. If they don't he will throw them out of the market and blacklist them.

Fish Fight at the Fish Mart

The fish mart closes to the public after 4:30 in the afternoon. The meeting has been set up for six that evening. This gives the heroes time to bind their wounds and get ready for the upcoming brawl. If they're typical goblins,

they will be drinking and quite drunk before the coming conflict, but that just might give them just enough edge to survive all this craziness. They will work with other members of Johnson's staff, including his personal rent-a-thugs and warehouse goblins Izri and Slashlip. These two huge goblins are strong, tough and about as intelligent as the dead fish they load into the carriages. Drunkenness fails to make them any more pleasant to be around, and their conversation about the odor of rancid mackerel being better than fresh tuna should make the PCs wonder how they ever became mixed up with Johnson in the first place.

Johnson, Izri and Slashlip have the money. The PCs wait in ambush, and Rumbub (with some friends) will serve as reinforcements. The plan is simple: Johnson will make the exchange, and then Izri and

Slashlip will whack Dragbottom and his men while the new employees ambush them from behind. If all goes well, Johnson will have the money, the jewels and the satisfaction of whacking Dragbottom. The knighthood is just icing on the cake.

Dragbottom suspects that Johnson has plans for him, so he has rounded up all of his men in the quarter to join him on the trip. What results is the makings of a riot in the fragrant marketplace.

Dragbottom has armed his men with clubs. Johnson has giant fish hooks, clubs, nets and crates of fish. It should be a fairly even matchup. Once the fight breaks out, it is every goblin for himself. Crates of fish will be broken over skulls. Hooks should wind up in unpleasant places and everyone should be battered and bloody. During the confusion, the PCs should be able to find Cutbirth and try to settle a few scores. He should be easy to spot because he is wrapped up



in bandages and using a large tuna for a weapon. He is armed with one of the fish taken during the ambush. Smacking one of Johnson's men, his fish bursts open and diamonds spill out onto the cobblestones of the market. This makes the fight even more frenzied as greedy goblins fight boot and nail to get a piece of the treasure.

The chaos could easily spill out of the marketplace and into the streets. Shop windows are broken. Innocents are caught up in the fray and the card game at Jezebel's is disturbed. Constables soon arrive on the scene and make a bad situation even worse. A general alarm is sounded and troops with rifles and cannon show up from the barracks, with Pitt personally leading his marines. A few shots are fired. When the smoke clears, Dragbottom's men have run, the fish market is a mess, Johnson has his money and about 5,000 pounds' worth of diamonds are still lying on the ground.

The Marine officer wants an explanation because he never misses his wife's home cooking and by the time this is finished it will be cold. Johnson uses all the Fast-Talk and Bard skills he can muster to try and get himself off the hook. Eying the diamonds on the ground, Conelly gets an idea.

"I say old chap, I have a game of bridge with Lord Carpetbagger tomorrow night. He won't at all be pleased if I tell him about this mess at the fish mart tonight."

"How can I convince you to give his lordship a favorable report," Johnson says.

"Well, my wife does like jewelry."

"Damn it, Egizical! Take them, but don't say a word to his lordship."

"Right, come on men. Let's go, dinner is getting cold."

With that, Conelly collects the rest of the jewels and the troops leave the market. Johnson is no better or worse for the experience. Dragbottom has lost face and Cutbirth can expect another bath in the Thames river. The players are maimed, bloody, and terrified but at least they have a job, which is nice.

Aftermath

Johnson will spend the next few weeks repairing the damage to the fish mart and will continue making seafood shipments to the upper classes. He knows he lost a chance at earning a knighthood, but the possibility is still open for a future attempt as long as Connelly keeps his mouth shut. Each day Johnson sends a fresh load of fish to the barracks with an envelope of cash. Dragbottom has lost face due to the whole misadventure and lies low, trying to figure out what to do next. He has future plans for Johnson and the characters; he just hasn't figured them out yet. Cutbirth has disappeared and many suspect that he is at the bottom of the Thames.



The heroes have earned a spot on Johnson's fish delivery team. Since they were so good to help the aspiring aristocrat, the least he can do is give them a living wage and a place to work. As winter settles into London, life returns to usual and the delicate balance of power in the quarter is restored. Plots and counter plots have clashed and thanks to goblin luck no one has come out ahead except the players, who have a job and a chance for further adventure in Rigg Quarter.

Running Gags

Life in Rigg quarter is unpredictable. These running gags are designed to provide some comic relief and distraction for the players. They can happen any time during the adventure or during a slow period when everyone needs a cheap laugh.

Artillery Practice: Each day at noon, the Marines at the barracks conduct artillery practice after the parade. Usually four goblins ride down the main street with a 500-pound siege cannon between their legs. Bystanders have learned to get out of the way. Those who don't suffer 4d of crushing damage from being run over. Once the cannon rolls down the hill and reaches the river, the goblin artillerists prime the gun and then fire it into the river. Usually, the goblins will shoot a cabbage into the river but if there is a luckless prole convenient, the poor creature will be used as ammunition instead. Once the exercise is over, it's lunch time in the quarter. All the shops close while their proprietors get drunk and enjoy their meals.

A Woman Scorned: During a particularly slow part of the adventure, the players are walking by a set of shops. The overheard a horrible argument.

"But dear!"

"Don't but me, you spend more time drinking gin than working."

"But dear!"

"How are you going to make the rent?"

"But dear —"

With that there is a crash of glass and a goblin explodes out of a glass window above the shop. The poor soul lands with a sickening thud, and it is obvious he has broken a shoulder. The injured goblin brushes himself off, gives a toothless smile to the players and says, "I guess I'd better be getting to work." He then pulls out a flask of gin and takes a hard swig before limping down the street to find work. The players learn the wages of sin and just how angry a lady goblin can get.

Billy the Beggar: Usually found outside the Bloody Bucket, Billy is a pathetic figure in Rigg quarter. The poor goblin has been begging for food, liquor, and money for as long as anyone can remember. Billy lost his hands and legs in a machine accident. Presently, he is missing most of his teeth and is infected with scarlet fever. "Come'on mate, just a penny or shilling for a lost soul," he says.

Most people ignore Billy. Those that are mean to the beggar usually contract his latest disease or suffer from a mysterious accident. Treat this as an extra (-3) to contagion rolls when checking for disease. If people give Billy a shilling or better they will automatically receive the blessing of good goblin luck, which is left to the discretion of the GM. Billy may be pathetic but he is also a good luck charm for any adventurer in Rigg Quarter.



Quirk: Short Arms

Skills: Stargazing-10, Stealth-9, Holdout-11, Pickpocket-11, Traps-8, Animal Handling-10, Merchant-10.

Col. Egizical Connelly (Status 4)

ST 10, DX 10, IQ 10, HT 10

Courage 10

Basic Speed 5, Move: 5

Dodge 5

Advantages: Gigantism, Strong Will +2.

Disadvantages: Compulsive Lying, Necrophilia.

Skills: Carousing-10, Brawling-12, Broadsword-11, Gunner (Cannon)-10, Traps-10, Guns (Pistol)-10.

Amos Cutbirth (Status -3)

ST 5, DX 14, IQ 7, HT 9

Courage 7

Basic Speed 5.75, Move 5

Dodge 5

Disadvantages: Ugly, Unluckiness, Acrophobia.

Quirk: Exceptionally long legs.

Skills: Climbing-14, Lockpicking-14, Gambling-8, Swimming-12, Forgery-10.

Peter "Lightweight" Rumbub (Status 0)

ST 12, DX 8, IQ 12, HT 6

Courage 12

Basic Speed: 3.5, Move 3

Dodge 3

Advantage: Night Vision.

Who's Who in Rigg Quarter

The following are common NPCs for this adventure. Feel free to create your own.

Gentleman Johnson (Status 4)

ST 7, DX 8, IQ 11, HT 14

Courage 7

Basic Speed 5.5, Move 5

Dodge 5

Advantage: Menace +1.

Disadvantages: Gigantism, Odious Personal Habit: High Living, Severe Alcoholism, Scotophobia.

Quirks: Broken nose.

Skills: Sex Appeal-14, Broadsword-10, Engineer-11, Brawling-10, Pickpocket- 8, Merchant-11.

Righteous Dagon Dragbottom (Status 1)

ST 13, DX 9, IQ 8, HT 9

Courage 13

Basic Speed 4.5, Move 4

Dodge 4

Advantages: Intuition-10, Menace +1, Strong Will +2.

Disadvantages: Agoraphobia, Severe Alcoholism.

Disadvantages: Odious Personal Habit: Overtly Friendly.

Quirk: Alcohol Intolerance.

Skills: Traps-12, Shortsword-9, Cooking-12, Broadsword-10.

Billy the Beggar (Status -4)

ST 4, DX 9, IQ 10, HT 10

Courage 7

Basic Speed: 4.75, Move 4

Dodge 4

Advantage: None, but he brings luck to others.

Disadvantages: No Hands, No Legs, Weirdness Magnet.

Quirks: Infected with scarlet fever.

Skills: Panhandling-10, Theology-10, Carousing-10.

Izri (Status -2)

ST 14, DX 10, IQ 7, HT 10

Courage 14

Basic Speed 5, Move 5

Dodge 5

Advantage: Strong Will +2.

Disadvantages: Berserk, Aquaphobia

Quirk: Exceptionally Long Arms.

Skills: Brawling-12, Broadsword-12, Teamster-9.

Slashslip (Status -2)

ST 14, DX 12, IQ 7, HT 11

Courage 14

Basic Speed 5.75, Move 5

Dodge 5

Advantage: Toughness (DR 2).

Disadvantages: Overconfidence, Necrophobia.

Quirk: Fur.

Skills: Brawling-12, Broadsword-12, Teamster-9.

Police (Status 0)

ST 12, DX 12, IQ 10, HT 10

Courage 12

Basic Speed: 5.5, Move 5

Dodge 5

Advantage: Toughness (DR 1).

Disadvantages: Ugly, No Sense of Humor.

Skills: Broadsword-12, Criminology-10, Law-10.

Marines (Status 0)

ST 11, DX 11, IQ 9, HT 11

Courage 11

Basic Speed: 5.5, Move 5

Dodge 5

Disadvantage: Severe Alcoholism.

Skills: Gun(Rifle)-11, Shortsword-11, Gunner (Cannon)-10.

Johnson's Thugs (Status -2)

ST 10, DX 12, IQ 9, HT 9

Courage 10

Basic Speed 5.25, Move 5

Dodge 5

Advantage: Menace +1.

Disadvantages: Gigantism, Post Combat Shakes.

Skills: Brawling-13, Teamster-9, Broadsword-12.

Dragbottom's Thugs (Status -4)

ST 10, DX 10, IQ 8, HT 11

Courage 10

Basic Speed: 5.25, Move 5

Dodge 5

Disadvantage: Berserk.

Quirk: Exceptionally Long Arms.

Skills: Brawling-12, Broadsword-12.

Bystanders (Status Variable)

ST 10, DX 10, IQ 8, HT 10

Courage 10

Basic Speed 5, Move 5

Dodge 5

Skill: Brawling-11.



PRINCE FROG

A Fantasy Adventure by Scott Tengelin

Introduction

The far-off principality of Glimpuddle has been recently troubled by the mage Therigon. With his bravest companions to accompany him, Prince Richard went in search of the wizard to stop him. There was a great battle, but in the end, Therigon won. Richard's companions were imprisoned with a horrible curse, changing their forms forever.

This is a story of a frog prince with a twist; the frog is in his natural form, while his subjects have been changed to humanoid statues. This adventure is for four to six characters, 100 to 125 points each. A wide variety of character types is recommended.

The Meeting

The characters encounter Prince Richard, a two-foot tall frog in chainmail, brooding by the side of the road. If the party talks to him, read the following:

"I am Prince Richard. My friends and I have journeyed from our principality to confront our most hated foe, only to lose the battle. My people have been imprisoned with a curse most foul, but I was allowed to escape to live with the burden of the curse for the rest of my days.

"Please, help me and my people! Our enemy is a mage whose strength I cannot combat alone. His treasure is great, of course, and you may keep all that you find, if only you help me break the spell. And you would have the gratitude of the people of Glimpuddle forever."

Notice that Richard said he was to live with the *burden* of the curse, not the curse itself. For the adventure to have the greatest impact, avoid letting the players know the nature of the people of Glimpuddle; let them think that Prince Richard is the classic prince turned into a frog. If asked, he will only call it a "curse most foul," and "a great burden for me to bear." If the party asks for the specifics of the curse, he will tell them that his people have

been turned into stone. Richard is not trying to hide anything from the characters; he is simply too preoccupied to consider the obvious. And of course it is only obvious to Richard that his people are humanoid frogs.

The Journey There

The forest seems to grow stranger as you travel along the path. Richard takes you down trails that you probably never could have found had you not had him as a guide. The mushrooms along the path stand as high as your waist, and the trees and flowers seem to watch you as you pass.

Gradually, the mushrooms and flowers become more sparse, and the trees seem to scowl at you and reach across the path with long, clawed branches. Clouds gather overhead, darkening the trail.

The party's journey to Therigon's lair can be as difficult or as easy as you wish. This forest is highly magical, and any encounters should reflect the sylvan setting.

The Lair of Therigon

When the party arrives, read the following:

The forest clears to reveal a fence of sharpened logs, surrounding three wooden buildings. Eight pens line the largest building, each containing a lean, hungry wolf. The buildings seem to be guarded by five statues, all in various battle poses. "My people! My people! Oh, how Therigon will pay for this!" Prince Richard exclaims.

The fence has a large set of wooden double doors, braced from the inside. A combined ST of 28 is required to force the doors open.

When the party enters, read the following:

The double doors to the farthest building fly open, and there stands a man in dark robes, with a thin black beard. "Richard!" he says, "I see you have brought new decorations for my home!" "Therigon!" Richard replies, "Raise your curse, and I will see you are spared! If you do not, you will die today!" With that, Therigon raises his hands, and the eight pens



swing open, releasing the mage's wolves. At the same time, about a dozen undead rise out of the ground, in various stages of decay. Richard bounds towards Therigon, sword drawn. "I will keep Therigon busy! Break the spell! Break the wand!"

The wand Richard is referring to is the Wand of Ages, held by the statue of Holofernes, in the center of the courtyard. It's very fragile, and breaks with any amount of force. Breaking it results in this: *Suddenly, with a flash of light and a clap of thunder, the spell is broken. The statues return to human form – and shrink to only 2' tall! Suddenly, the courtyard is filled with bounding frog people, leaping this way and that, fighting the forces of Therigon.*

With the added forces, the party faces only two skeletons, two zombies and three wolves. The wolves rush the strongest members; the undead attack whoever is closest.

Skeletons (4)

ST 9, DX 15, IQ 8, HT 10.

Basic Speed 7.25, Move 7.

Dodge 7, Parry (Broadsword) 8.

Advantages: High Pain Threshold, impaling weapons do -2 damage.

Disadvantages: Crushing weapons do double damage.

Skills: Broadsword-17 (-1 for lower ST than minimum).

Weapon: Poor-quality broadsword, 1d cut, 1d imp.

Wolves (8)

ST 8, DX 14, IQ 5, HT 12.

Basic Speed 9, Move 9.

Dodge 7.

PD 1, DR 1.

Weapons: bite does 1d-2 cut, at Reach C.

Zombies (4)

ST 11, DX 13, IQ 8, HT 15,

Basic Speed 7, Move 7.

Dodge 7, Parry (Broadsword) 7.

Advantages: High Pain Threshold.

Skills: Broadsword-15.

Weapon: Poor-quality broadsword, 1d+2 cut, 1d+1 imp.

As soon as half of Therigon's force is defeated, Richard will fall – not dead, but stunned. His friends will be too busy with their own opponents, so it will be up to the PCs to defeat Therigon. He will have spent four fatigue in spells and have taken 3 damage at this point, and his stats below reflect this.

Therigon

ST 9/5, DX 11, IQ 15, HT 10/7.

Basic Speed 5.25, Move 5.

Dodge 5, Parry (Quarterstaff) 8.

PD 2 (from staff).

Advantages: Magery 2, Literacy.

Disadvantages: Intolerance: All but animals, Sadism.

Skills: Animal Handling-15, Quarterstaff-12, Survival-14, Tracking-14, Alchemy-14, Occultism-15, Magic Jet-13.



Quirks: Talks to animals and undead.

Spells: Beast Soother-15, Persuasion-15, Sense Foes-15, Water Jet-15, Shape Water-15, Create Water-15, Purify Water-15, Seek Water-15.

Equipment: Therigon's staff contains the Staff spell, and provides the owner with 2 PD.

The Wand of Ages holds 25 fatigue, and contains the spells Zombie, Flesh to Stone and Shapeshift Others (Human). Breaking the wand will break the spell on Richard's subjects, changing them back to their normal state.

If the party searches Therigon's home, they will find \$1,500 in gold coins, plus his spellbooks; any spell Therigon knows is available for PC mages to learn. Therigon also has two magical potions he has created, in an outside laboratory; an Elixir of Invulnerability and an Elixir of Health. Before the battle, Therigon will not have time to get to these, but will try to flee into his home if the battle goes poorly.

Conclusion

Richard will be eternally grateful for the PCs' help, and will invite them to a feast in their honor, in the village of Glimpuddle. There should be no encounters on the way there, but the path will be just as mysterious as before.

As the players might expect, the entire village is populated with humanoid frogs, all about two feet tall. They live in large mushroom houses, with swamp all around the village. Dinner consists of a fine wine (made from fermented lilies), honey bread and roast quail. After the banquet, the party is invited to stay as long as they like, as royal guests. They may return whenever they wish, and will always be welcome in Glimpuddle. But finding the hidden country again may prove to be another adventure entirely . . .

Award each PC two character points for the adventure, plus one for exceptional roleplaying.



MOTIVE FORCE

by John W. Baichtal

This *Space* adventure is for four to six 100-125 point characters. They should have plenty of combat experience and have the reputation of being tough hombres. This adventure is set on Elmedine (Omega Pavonis Four), an isolated colony world. Elmedine has a population of 300,000, and is almost completely human in makeup. However, the sight of aliens will not provoke any alarm. How the party gets to the world is up to the GM to decide, but it is recommended that the party be trapped there, because of a quarantine placed on the world due to a dangerous outbreak of Vynder's Syndrome. The text of the adventure includes a number of newsfeeds, news programs broadcasted on holosets to everyone in the colony. If the party opts not to be part of the adventure, these newsfeeds can be used to add color to the campaign.

Enter the Party, Stage Left, Filling out Forms

The party is at a bureaucrat's office, filling out work permits so they can get mercenary and security jobs – the party is essentially trapped on Elmedine until the quarantine is lifted.

Elmedine seemed a pleasant enough resting stop after your last adventure. However, you curse your decision to stay here, for the whole planet was shortly thereafter slapped with a quarantine, due to the outbreak of some disease which is dropping people left and right. Its effects are a progressive loss of strength lasting for a month, resulting in a coma-like state which can lead to death – but none of you are experiencing any weakness as yet. To make some money and while away the hours before you can be off again, you are applying for a local mercenary's license. You are working your way through your third set of documents and permits when the application clerk starts yelling something about a vaccine and turns his holoset up.

Pav4 Holo95 Newsfeed: "This is Safana Hasan. Though details are still quite sketchy, our reporters have monitored a significant movement of security personnel around the Al-Matar spaceport, coinciding

with the long-awaited arrival of the CMS Jaruzelsky, a Luxembourg-class Starhauler which contains the desperately needed Vynder's Syndrome vaccine. Ambulances have been seen transporting port personnel to local hospitals, but so far the nature of the casualties – and the reasons for the injuries – is unknown. More information is upcoming, so stay keyed to Holo95!"

Shortly after the *Jaruzelsky* touched down, a small group of escaped criminals forced their way aboard and took it over. At the time that the characters hear about the incident, the hijackers are still holed up in the *Jaruzelsky*, and in a short while they begin issuing their demands. They have said in an audio message that they would destroy the medicine unless their demands are met.

Fifteen minutes after the first newsfeed, another one is piped through:

Pav4 Holo95 Newsfeed: "We go now to Holo95 reporter Jeff Yamaguchi, who is only a hundred meters from the cargo ship. Jeff?"

"Safana, there are all the signs of a hijacking of the vaccine transport. I'm seeing bodies of numerous port personnel lying scattered around the gangway of the *Jaruzelsky*. Other people are crawling away, obviously wounded. Two security vehicles and a cargo truck are burning nearby. Safana, I talked to a port mechanic who said a ferocious firefight took place, with gunmen firing point blank at port officials and security, cutting them down without warning. Getting confirmation of this is a problem, because security and police headquarters are in chaos, with many personnel out sick with the Syndrome. But we hope to get more information soon because Governor Roberto Anton is en route. Jeff Yamaguchi, Holo95."

Somewhat distracted by these events, you work on completing the labyrinthine forms before you, which proves to be a quarter-hour process. Toward the end, the phone buzzes and the clerk talks for a while on the other end. You hear, "Why yes, I have some here right now!" and his eyes glance over in your direction. He talks a bit more, and then disconnects and walks over to your table. "Folks, I may have a job for you!"

The PCs will probably not be surprised to hear that the "job" involves the hijacking. In essence, the party must serve as assistants and bodyguards to the Governor, who will be negotiating with the hijackers. The reason the party is used rather than local law-enforcement personnel is that all of the combat-veteran personnel are either dead or too sick to fight. Anton (who was actually the lieutenant governor of the colony until the Syndrome killed his boss) is an old soldier who has insisted on veteran gunslingers to back him up if the negotiations break down, because the hijackers are obviously pros.

The Vaccine

The medicine was sent three weeks ago from Tomoranda Station, a famous orbital hospital. The vaccine is enough to inoculate everyone on the planet, but to be absolutely certain, another load of vaccine was prepared three days later and sent by separate ship, in case anything happened to the first one en route. Theoretically, the hijacking could be ignored and the second ship's medicine used to help the population, but the Syndrome has reached critical stages and thousands of people are dying every day – three days more is an intolerable wait. The GM should play up the pressure on the party – have irate officials call them up every half hour demanding progress reports, and so on.

Negotiations, Part One

The meeting has been set for a VTOL landing circle in the Al-Matar spaceport, a short distance from the *Jaruzelsky*. The agreement is that Anton and his associates will go unarmed, but only one hijacker will be present. The following facts are at the party's disposal:

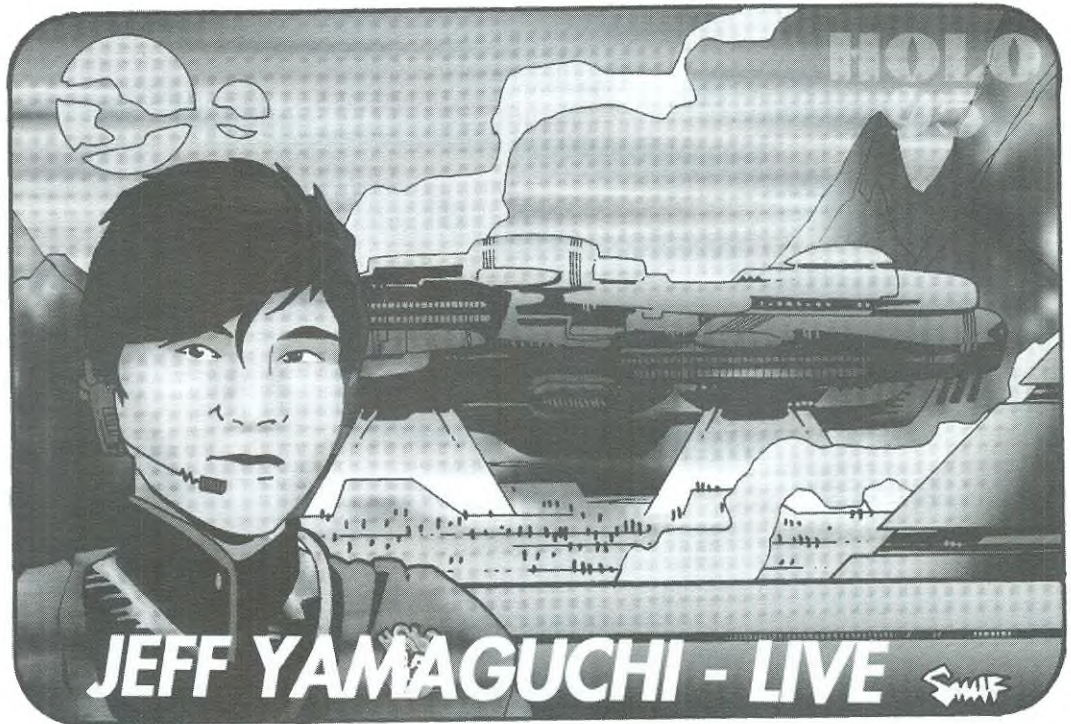
1. Six police sharpshooters are posted atop hangars to prevent the escape of the hijackers or to support a raid.

2. The hijackers are believed to be convicts who broke out of the undermanned prison. There were eight hijackers originally, but two were killed in the taking of the ship, leaving six, some of whom may be too wounded to fight. The hijackers carry police-issue weaponry.

3. The hijackers drove through a security checkpoint in a large truck, the sort which normally could carry five tons of cargo.

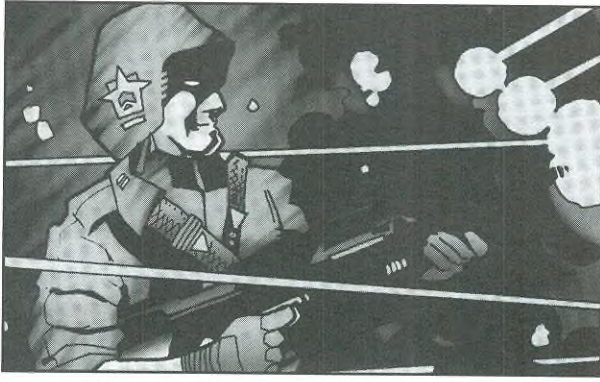
4. The bodies of the slain, including the portmaster, five security guards, two hijackers and two starship crewmen, lie next to the ship. Neither side can recover their dead until a truce is called. The weapons of these casualties remain scattered around the area, including at least two laser rifles and half a dozen pistols.

5. The *Jaruzelsky* normally carries a crew of six, so there must be four crewmen left alive inside the ship.



Pav4 HOLO95 Newsfeed: "This is Jeff Yamaguchi, reporting from the Al-Matar landing field where Governor Roberto Anton is preparing to meet with the hijackers of the CMS *Jaruzelsky*. Accompanying the governor are a number of plainclothes security officers, but no police or spaceport personnel as far as I can tell. At this time, there is no movement from the captured starship."

The mercenaries approach the landing circle in landcars, obviously beating the hijacker delegation to the meeting. Governor Anton steps out and squints against the sun, peering across the shimmering tarmac to the *Jaruzelsky* 300 meters away. There is no sign of the hijacker.



After about five minutes, a small, dark figure strides down the gangway and begins walking toward the landing circle, obviously not in a hurry. Finally the hijacker arrives. She is a skinny, scarred woman with black hair and tanned skin, wearing grimy prison blues and a police-issue reflect vest, with a laser pistol and knife belted to her waist and a pair of smoke grenades clipped to a chest harness. The oppressive heat has made her hair limp and speckled her brow with sweat. With a dramatic flourish, the woman removes her pistol and leaves it at the edge of the circle, before walking to the center to meet the party.

The laser pistol is empty, in case a PC tries to grab it and use it. However, the hijacker has another laser at the small of her back, and as long as she faces the party at all times it will remain concealed. The woman introduces herself as “Ace,” though her real name is Cypress Tramann. She has olive skin and black hair, and is thin and muscular in a wiry sort of way. She usually has a squinting and hostile expression on her face. If the party firmly insists Ace dump the knife, she will comply, grudgingly, and the same with the smoke grenades. She will not allow herself to be searched or detained.

Ace is an excellent fighter, and has a natural talent for machines and piloting. She is also a capable leader and wins the admiration of her associates with her toughness, cleverness and skill. Ace’s main weakness is her terrible temper. In fights she kicks, screams, shoots, and stabs until all her enemies are down. Only her excellent skills and instincts, as well as a great deal of luck, have allowed her to live as long as she has.

Ace has brought with her a list of demands. In return, Governor Anton will have his own list of things that the colonists need. Rather than presenting everything at once, Ace and Anton will offer one thing while requesting many concessions from the other side. The party will be briefed on what Anton will demand.

Ace’s List

1. Remove the snipers from the vicinity of the *Jaruzelsky*.
2. Free the 12 imprisoned members of the Al-Sarukh revolutionary party* (a religious fundamentalist group seeking to overthrow the secular government).
3. Arrange for a ground truck with a cargo capacity of 5 tons to be brought to the ship.

4. Deliver a cash ransom amounting to \$1 billion (!)**.

* Actually, the hijackers care nothing for this group or its politics. They will immediately agree to drop this demand in exchange for the smallest concession on the colonists’ part.

** This is also negotiable. Cash gained in this enterprise is secondary to the hijackers’ other goal, as described below.

What She Has to Offer

1. The vaccine.
2. Four crewmen of the *Jaruzelsky* held captive but relatively healthy.
3. Allowing the bodies to be recovered.

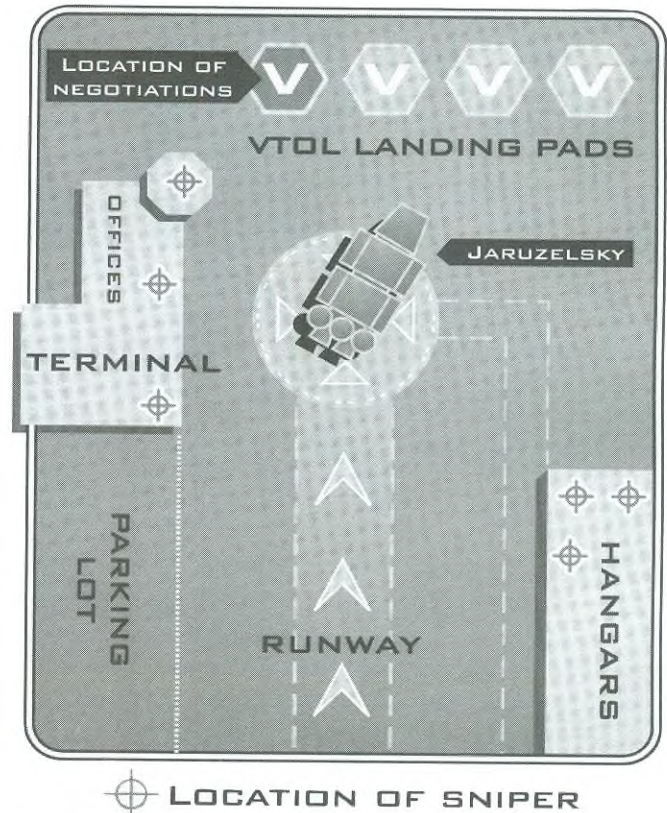
Anton’s List

1. Allow the bodies of the slain to be removed from the vicinity of the *Jaruzelsky*.
2. Release the hostages or at least permit their health to be checked by doctors.
3. Release the vaccine, or barring that, release a quantity as a goodwill gesture to treat individuals who are close to dying.

What He Has to Offer

1. Amnesty until the quarantine is lifted, then passage off-planet to a system nearby.

Obviously, these do not match up very well, and it will appear that much negotiation will be necessary to smooth out the wrinkles. Just as things are getting



started, however, HOLO95's ace reporter Jeff Yamaguchi tries to get close enough to hear what's going on, spooking Ace. Yamaguchi's stats are not presented here. The GM can build him on 80 points if necessary, but his only role in the adventure is to spark the gunfight that will put the party in the negotiator's seat.

Anton and the hijacker are still arguing about some aspect of the situation when the party abruptly notice a man dressed in casual clothes, stealthily moving toward the landing circle – he doesn't look like a hijacker, and carries no weapon though he has a small black device in his hand, which he is pointing in your direction. Suddenly, Ace becomes aware of him, too. Perhaps she saw you glance over at him, or maybe she heard his quiet footsteps, but she seems genuinely surprised and angry.

"Betrayal!" she snarls, whipping out a laser from behind her back.

Ace draws her concealed gun and shoots the governor. For story purposes, this shot automatically hits and may either kill or wound the governor; either way he is out of the scenario. If the party somehow prevents Ace from shooting at all, a hijacker shoots from the ship and hits Anton. Ace tosses her smoke grenades and runs for the *Jaruzelsky*, protected from the snipers by the smoke. If the party brought their own weapons (against orders), they can shoot at Ace, and perhaps kill her, though if they do that, the leader of the hijackers will destroy one crate of vaccine (there are five, total) and kill one hostage in revenge. Yamaguchi will not be injured in the fight unless a PC shoots him.

Pav4 HOLO95 Newsfeed: "This is Safana Hasan, with breaking news on the negotiations with the hijackers of the relief ship *Jaruzelsky*. There are reports of laser fire and at least one person on the official negotiating team has been rushed to the hospital, though the victim's identity is as yet unknown. However, unconfirmed reports indicate that the injured person may have been Governor Anton, though we must stress that this information has not been confirmed. Stay keyed to HOLO95."



Negotiations, Part Two

So few leaders are left after Anton's shooting that the party is asked to continue the negotiations. They have orders to attack the ship to free the vaccine if negotiations do not succeed in 24 hours. After the fracas in the landing circle, the repartee takes place via radio. Whether Ace escaped or not, the negotiator will be a man with a deep, booming voice, who will call himself "King." This is actually the leader of the hijackers, a pirate captain by the name of Kambr Matteus.

It is up to the party to negotiate. PCs feeling over their heads can call downtown for help, but with so many people in the advanced stages of Vynder's Syndrome, the party will not receive any aid. The best they can get is get permission to do "whatever it takes" to get the vaccine back, as 15,000 people will die in the three days it will take for the second shipment of vaccine to be delivered. If this means anything at all to the party they will be eager to help in any way they can.

At this point, the adventure cannot be clearly mapped out, because there are so many possibilities. Rather than listing out all the possible tangents of the negotiation process, only certain events and possible endings will be described. A simplified explanation of the hijackers' motivations and tactics:

A month ago, a few days after the quarantine was declared, Captain Kambr Matteus barreled into the Omega Pavonis system in his ship, the *Skyhawk*, pursued closely by a trio of Confederation frigates. Just as he entered Elmedine's atmosphere and lost his pursuers (whose crews dared not break the quarantine), a laser bolt slammed into the *Skyhawk* and turned her light drive into a bonfire. Without the drive, she could not leave the atmosphere without being destroyed by the sentry bots in orbit, set to guard against people escaping the Syndrome.

Discouraged but not beaten, Matteus concealed his ship in the wilderness and trekked with his surviving crewmen to Elmedine City with the idea of stealing a light drive to re-equip the *Skyhawk*. Unfortunately, the local authorities had been alerted by the Confederation ships and easily captured the pirates, planning to hold them in prison until the quarantine was to be lifted. A day before the adventure begins, Matteus, his crew, and a bunch of vicious criminals murdered their guards and broke out of jail, and the captain convinced his surviving cohorts to make for the spaceport. The only FTL ship not in total lockdown was the *Jaruzelsky*.

Captain Matteus knew full well the furor that would be caused by taking the *Jaruzelsky*, but went ahead with it anyway. The plan was to attack the ship and strip it of its stardrive and be away before anyone knew what was happening. Unfortunately, there was a ten-man reception committee waiting for the vaccine and the simple raid turned into a raging gun battle. As the pirates swarmed aboard the *Jaruzelsky*, a guard's laser rifle turned the engine of their truck into flaming wreckage, leaving them no way to transport the bulky drive away from the spaceport. The pirates' backup plan was to fly the *Jaruzelsky* to safety, but her captain was injured and comatose and only he has the key codes necessary to fly the ship. By the time Matteus had figured out what was happening, security forces had surrounded the ship and he was trapped. It was then that the pirates formulated a plan to hold the vaccine for ransom.

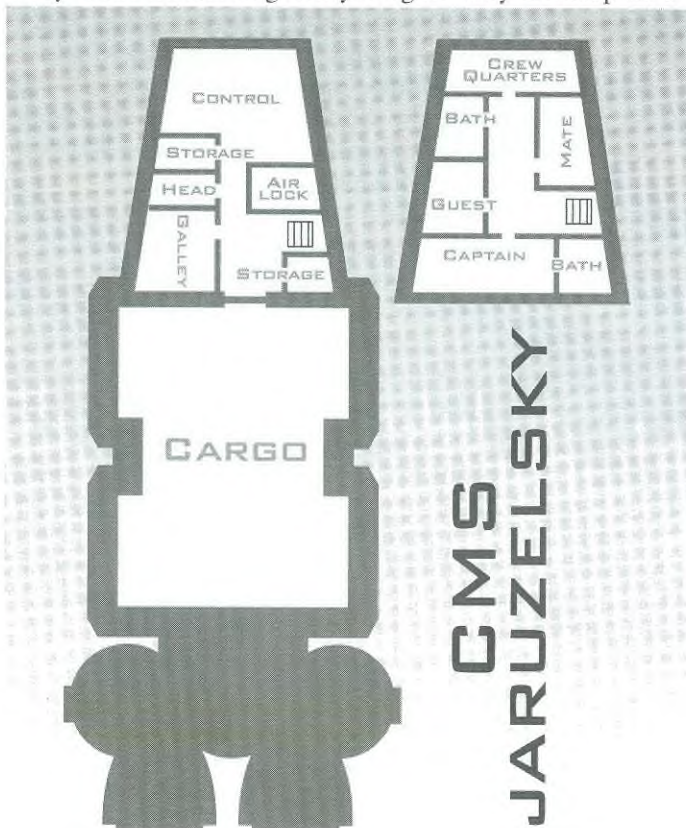
There were six crewmen aboard the *Jaruzelsky*, of whom four still live. Captain Rickman Gajemba was pistol-whipped into a coma, and his first mate and chief engineer slain. The three other crewmen are Aamasimu-Hnagahla (engineer's mate), Isoruku Terra (cargo officer) and Dr. Benjamin Lars (science/medical officer). These individuals will not be described in more detail, but if their stats are needed, the GM should build Gajemba on 125 points, Lars on 100, and Terra and Hnagahla on 70 points. These last three NPCs are only slightly wounded, but they are securely tied and under normal circumstances cannot help the party. Hnagahla is an alien, a Phylan (an insectoid humanoid).

Twists and Turns

The following are a number of plot elements that can be inserted to keep the party on their toes:

- Isoruku Terra, one of the crewmen of the *Jaruzelsky*, escapes and starts running for the party. A laser blast from the ship leaves him wounded and helpless on the tarmac. Any attempt to rescue him will be greeted with a torrent of weapons fire from the ship. If rescued, Terra can describe all the pirates and give the party vital information about their motives.

- The Phylan captive, Aamasimu-Hnagahla, dies. Though it was only slightly wounded, the stress of the fight and the subsequent imprisonment carried it into a condition which causes it to spontaneously give birth to four infant Phylans. It is a biological imperative in the race that a dying Phylan almost always reproduces asexually, its body mass nourishing the young as they develop in a



matter of a few hours. Matteus will be talking to the party when in the background the party will hear laser blasts and shouts coming from inside the ship as the pirates panic (young Phylans are fast and dangerous-looking, though essentially harmless). This may cause the party to think that the pirates are fighting among themselves or prisoners have broken loose. If the party makes a dash for the gangway, the two pirates on duty at the door will fire their laser rifles at the party and call for help. If the party follows through with an attack at this point, it will be a bloody mess and a lot of innocent people may die – or the party could take the ship and recover the vaccine.

- Once the pirates realize they are not dealing with colonists, they attempt to bribe the party. They will give the PCs an equal share of whatever they get from the colonists if the party joins them and helps them escape. The party may agree with the pirates, genuinely or as a ploy, as they see fit.

- As part of the negotiation process, the pirates agree to release one hostage. Down the gangplank walks one of the hijackers, Teodoro “Tibo” Mikaleyev, who says he is the cargo officer of the *Jaruzelsky*. If the party questions him, he will seem annoyingly dumb, and will not be able to supply any worthwhile intelligence on his “captors.” Backing up Tibo’s ploy is the fact that he was born with a facial deformity that makes him look like a simpleton. If the party leaves him alone, Tibo sneaks off and steals a truck big enough to haul the engine, and attempts to drive it to the ship.

- Approximately 200 relatives of Syndrome victims band together and march on the *Jaruzelsky*, demanding the release of the vaccine. Unless the party can defuse the situation, the mob attacks the ship and is routed, and in the confusion, a couple of pirates manage to steal a truck of the right size. Unless the party can stop them, they quickly offload the engine and drive off, leaving the vaccine behind.

- If the standoff lasts more than 24 hours, one of the escaped prisoners, Cathy Fong (see the section on the pirate crew) tries to slip off into the night, betraying her comrades. If the party keeps some sort of watch or sets alarms, they have a chance of catching her, and if they do, they can easily bully her into telling everything she knows of the pirates.

- The party sees a dark form slipping across the field toward the *Jaruzelsky*. It is Jeff Yamaguchi, intrepid reporter, risking his life for an exclusive interview with the “terrorists.” If the party can’t stop him, he will board the ship and be taken hostage.

Conclusions

There are so many variables that it is impossible to plot out just one ending for this adventure. The pirates may get away scot-free, or they could all be captured. The vaccine could be destroyed or rescued. Accordingly, a number of endings are presented here, and the GM should pick the one that most closely fits the situation.



- The party receives word from the governor's office that the Syndrome situation has reached critical levels – too many people need the vaccine and hundreds die every hour. The party is ordered to attack the pirates and do everything possible to recover the vaccine.

- If negotiations bog down, the pirates will attempt to steal a vehicle big enough to haul the star drive. Some of the pirates will jump out of the *Jaruzelsky* and start firing at people nearby, while two others sneak away and attempt to steal a truck. Once they are away, the other pirates will retreat back into the ship.

- Those colony officials that remain deliver to the party a ransom of \$1.2 million, the most they could scrape together. They agree to all of the pirate's demands vis-a-vis the truck. It is up to the party whether they want to risk capturing or killing the pirates or simply just follow the colonists' lead and let the pirates go free.

- If the party negotiates in a tough manner, demanding a great deal but not giving much in return, the pirates finally agree to release three boxes of vaccine in exchange for the \$1.2 million the colonists have provided. The three crates will be set out on the tarmac for the PCs to collect. However, one crate contains a huge tear gas bomb, and the other two will hold hijackers (Zero and Ginnett). When the party shows up, the bomb will go off, and the gas-masked pirates will jump out and try to capture the PCs' vehicle. The other pirates will pile out of the ship and assist. Unless the party is protected, they will suffer the effects of tear gas as described in the *GURPS Basic Set*, p. 132.

- If the negotiations stretch on for more than 48 hours, the pirates will attempt to escape. The hostages will be used as human shields and the ship will be set on fire to provide cover from snipers. Obviously, this means that the pirates will not be able to escape with the light drive.

- If the pirates can get a truck, they tie hostages to its exterior and all pile in with the light drive, shooting in all directions as they careen through the city. The vaccine is left on the tarmac, unharmed. The PCs will have to

decide whether to chase after the pirates or simply grab the vaccine and save some lives.

- The pirates request a doctor for Rickman Gajemba, the captain of the *Jaruzelsky* – the ship's medical officer, Dr. Lars, is a pharmacist along to take care of the vaccine and has no knowledge of helping coma victims. Assuming the party agrees, and doesn't try some sort of subterfuge, the doctor succeeds in bringing the captain out of his coma. The pirates immediately start torturing Gajemba in order to learn the key codes for operating the ship. Meanwhile, the doctor runs away and warns the party of what is happening. The party must immediately raid the *Jaruzelsky* or the pirates will simply fly the ship away.

The Hijackers

This is a group of ruthless convicts and cruel and desperate pirates. They are cunning and well-led, and have a good supply of weapons and other equipment, enough to make a direct assault suicidal.

Kambr Matteus

ST 19, DX 12, IQ 14, HT 15/19

41 years old; auburn hair, blue eyes, pale skin; 5' 5", 350 lbs. – 250 points.

Advantages: Charisma +1, Combat Reflexes, Extra Hit Points +4, Heavy Worlder, Language Talent +3, Toughness (DR 1).

Disadvantages: Enemy – the Government, Fat, Odious Personal Habits (Smelly cigars, thunderous belches), Overconfidence.

Quirks: Always carries a holdout weapon, hates being bored.

Skills: Astrogation-13, Beam Weapons(laser)-17, Brawling-16, Computer Operation-15, Fast-Draw (Pistol)-11, Free Fall-11, Gambling-13, Guns-14, Knife-11, Leadership-17, Parachuting-12, Piloting (Starship)-15, Speed Load (laser)-13, Tactics-12, Vacc Suit-13.

Equipment: Reflec suit over prison blues, laser pistol, gas mask, 2 knives (belt and boot), 5 laser clips, 2 tear gas grenades.

Matteus is from a heavy planet, and consequently is immensely strong. Always a fan of sports and games of chance, he took up a life of piracy for the sheer excitement of it, though he could easily make an honest living if he could stand the boredom. As a consequence of this need for excitement, he often makes decisions that are based on alleviating his boredom rather than doing the right thing. Nevertheless, he is a powerful and cunning opponent. From the beginning of his adult life, Kambr has been a ship captain. His wealthy family purchased him his own ship when he turned 18, and though his fortunes have risen and fallen over the years, he has never been without a ship – until now.

Kambr trusts no one completely, but likes Cypress and Tibo a great deal. He respects Zero's toughness but fears his indiscriminate rage. Fong and Ginnett are tools to be used and discarded.

Cypress Tramann

ST 14, DX 13, IQ 10, HT 15

30 years old; Black hair and olive skin; 6'1", 100 lbs. – 150 points.

Advantages: Acute Hearing +1, Alertness +2, Charisma +2, Combat Reflexes, High Pain Threshold, Luck, Strong Will +2.

Disadvantages: Berserk, Enemy (Government, Rarely Shows Up), Poor, Skinny, Social Stigma (Space Gypsy), Stubbornness.

Quirks: Considers herself evil; keeps track of number of kills (15); likes arguing in a loud voice; morose.

Skills: Agronomy-9, Beam Weapons (Laser)-16, Fast-Draw (Pistol)-12, Free Fall-12, Knife-14, Knife Throwing-12, Mechanic (Agricultural machines)-9, Piloting (Starship)-15, Streetwise-9, Vacc Suit-12.

Equipment: Reflec vest over prison blues, 2 laser pistols, dagger, 2 smoke grenades, 3 laser clips.

Cypress was born in a family of transient laborers who shipped from one system to another, looking for low-end agricultural jobs to be done. In a crackdown against crime committed by such drifters, the government of one planet arrested her family and put them in a forced-labor camp where they have languished for the last ten years. In the meantime, Cypress, who avoided capture, has been plotting to win their escape, without much result. Her lack of success has made this woman surly and hostile. She is the *Skyhawk's* pilot.

Tramann respects the captain's strength and cunning, but as far as she is concerned he is still a slumming rich boy, just like the ones who imprisoned her family. She likes Tibo and considers him a true friend. She thinks Zero is a loose cannon and will arrange for an "accident" to eliminate him if they both survive. Ginnett is an annoying thug and Fong is a creepy nerd, and while Cypress would not directly hurt either one (except in self-defense) she would be pleased if they met unfortunate ends.

Zero

ST 10, DX 13, IQ 16, HT 4/12

17 years old; pale, blotched skin, sandy hair; 5'5", 115 lbs. – 150 points.

Advantages: Combat Reflexes, Danger Sense, High Pain Threshold, Peripheral Vision, Toughness (DR 1), Extra Hit Points +8, Hard to Kill +5.

Disadvantages: Terminally Ill, Ugly, Odious Personal Habit (Doesn't bathe, -3 to reactions), Youth, Berserk, Bully.

Quirks: Speaks in monosyllables; will kill "allies" if he can get away with it.

Skills: Astrogation-15, Beam Weapons (Laser)-20, Breath Control-13, Computer Operation-16, Escape-11, Fast-Draw (Knife) Fast-Draw (Pistol)-14, Free Fall-16, Gunner (Starship weapons)-14, Guns (Shotgun)-17, Karate-14, Knife Throwing-15, Knife-16, Literature-14, Mechanic (Stardrive)

-15, Physiology-13, Pilot (Large spacecraft)-12, Stealth -12, Vacc Suit-15.

Equipment: Riot shotgun (equal to a Remington 870, described in the *GURPS Basic Set*, except that it has a clip holding 20 shells), laser pistol and 3 spare clips, knife, reflec jacket over prison blues, gas mask, two tear gas grenades.

Zero is a rangy, scarred killer with sickly grayish skin and wiry, light brown hair. His eyes are best described as "scary." This pathetic young man is the son of a female death-row inmate on a distant world. Shortly before his mother was executed, she gave birth to him. A prison doctor into "unorthodox" scientific pursuits managed to legally adopt the baby for the sole purpose of experimenting on him, and over the course of many years, Patient 3Z (which was Zero's sole designation) was pumped full of experimental medicines and synapse patterns (memories) belonging to other people. Specifically, the doctor was researching the possibility of teaching skills by direct transference of memories. At the age of 17, Patient 3Z escaped and ultimately joined Matteus' pirate ship, picking the name Zero for himself. He is a very dangerous person in many ways, with no cognizance of laws and no qualms whatsoever about killing. Some of the memories implanted in him involved weapons use and martial arts, so he is quite skilled as well as cool and confident in battles. On the other hand, his body was terribly damaged by all the experimentation. Zero's skin is blotched and discolored, and he is frequently bedridden by a variety of sicknesses. A doctor who treated him for wounds suffered in a gunfight, said he has less than two years to live – it is only a matter of time before Zero's abused brain and body simply quit.

Zero hates everyone. He remembers every joke and insult directed at him by his crewmates, and is saving up his revenge – the first to die will be Tramann, for rejecting his advances.



Teodoro "Tibo" Mikaleyev

ST 13, DX 11, IQ 10, HT 14

31 years old; light brown hair, brown eyes; 5' 10", 180 lbs. – 100 points

Advantage: Combat Reflexes.

Disadvantages: Dyslexia (-5 pt.), Shyness (-5 pt.), Stuttering, Ugly (-10 pt.).

Skills: Acrobatics-9, Beam Weapons (Laser)-15, Brawling-13, Fast-Draw (Pistol)-12, Force Sword-10, Free Fall-11, Knife-13, Knife Throwing-10, Parachuting-11, Tactics-8, Vacc Suit-9.

Quirk: Talks like a child; Loves Tramann.

Equipment: Reflec vest over police cammos, combat helmet with gas mask, laser rifle, force sword, 2 tear gas grenades, knife, 5 laser clips.

Tibo Mikaleyev is a average sized man with pale skin and a brown buzz-cut. He usually has an idiotic expression on his face. This apparent simpleton is a long-standing member of Kambr's crew. Originally, the captain allowed Tibo to join so he could be used as cannon fodder, but in fight after fight he survived, and since then everyone has grown fond of him. Kambr no longer sends him on suicide missions. Actually, Tibo is smarter than he looks and acts. A genetic disease has given him a babylike face and makes him talk like a 4-year-old, but his brain is normal and he is pretty smart outside of social situations. In particular, he is a cunning and deadly warrior, his skills honed by a great deal of practice.

Tibo pretends to like everyone, but he has feelings just like everyone else. The captain is like a father to him, but Tibo can't forget all the suicide missions he was sent on just because of his handicap. He has very strong mixed feelings about Matteus. On the other hand, he is totally in love with Tramann, despite the fact that she treats him like a little boy, not the man he is. Zero and Ginnett are dumb killers – he's seen them come and go. Tibo has been fooled by Fong's beauty and thinks she is nice.

Cathy Fong

ST 8, DX 11, IQ 14, HT 11

35 years old; pale olive skin, brown hair, brown eyes; 5' 2", 95 lbs. – 80 points

Advantages: Attractive, Danger Sense.

Disadvantages: Cowardice, Greed, Social Stigma (Convict, -2 pt.).

Skills: Accounting-17, Beam Weapons-9 (default), Computer Operation-16, Computer Programming-17, Forgery-12, Free Fall-10, Mathematics-14, Pilot (Shuttle)-11, Savoir-Faire-14, Skiing-10.

Quirks: Vain; Flirtatious.

Equipment: Reflec vest over police-issue cammos, gas mask, laser pistol.

Cathy is a plump woman born on Earth. She has light brown hair and pale skin, and wears rainbow-tinted contact lenses. Cathy was imprisoned for skimming money

from the Elmedine orphan's fund, and looks forward to 5-10 years in the joint plus a lifetime of social ostracism. Thus, she chose to join Matteus. Fong dislikes most of the crew of the *Skyhawk*, and violence makes her nervous. She does like money, however, a lot. Cathy will do anything for money, and doesn't care how many people suffer as a result. This is the hook Kambr has over her – he has promised her a great deal of money if his plot is successful.

Fong is careful around Matteus and Tramann, fearing their toughness and unity. She thinks Tibo is retarded, and has not realized how smart he really is. Cathy is totally afraid of Ginnett and Zero, because they seem on the edge, ready to explode into violence at any provocation.

Hakeem Ginnett

ST 15, DX 11, IQ 9, HT 13

33 years old; dark skin, black hair, brown eyes; 6' 4", 225 lbs. – 80 points

Advantage: High Pain Threshold.

Disadvantages: Bully, Laziness, Odious Personal Habit (swears), Social Stigma (Convict -10 pt.).

Skills: Beam Weapons-14, Brawling-12, Free Fall-10, Streetwise-10.

Quirk: Worships Matteus.

Equipment: Black SWAT jumpsuit, gas mask, laser rifle, laser pistol, 1 extra pistol clip, 2 tear gas grenades.

Ginnett is a punk who broke out of prison with Matteus. Hakeem's story is a typical one for a convict: he came from a broken family and got into trouble a lot as a kid, and at the age of 18 gunned down a businessman for the few bucks in his wallet. For the next 14 years Hakeem sat in jail, and a few days after his release he shot another man, ending up in jail again. Matteus has promised him a place among the *Skyhawk's* crew, but in truth, Hakeem would make a terrible crewman. He has no technical skills, and doesn't take orders worth a damn, and refuses to do the few tasks he is capable of doing – cleaning, for instance. If he were to die, no one alive would shed a tear over him.

Ginnett has undeveloped social skills, which causes him to think in immature ways: he practically worships Matteus as the embodiment of the perfect man – immensely strong, ruthless, and dominant among lesser men and women. However, he is careful to disguise this respect with an ever-present attitude. Hakeem automatically assumes he is tougher than Zero (a kid), Tibo (a "retard") and Cathy and Cypress (two women) and foolishly sees himself as the captain's right hand.

Afterword

For maximum entertainment of everyone involved, the GM should encourage roleplaying and negotiation rather than immediate violence. Conversely, the players should not be badgered into any one path. The GM's job is to roleplay the NPCs and make sure everyone has fun.

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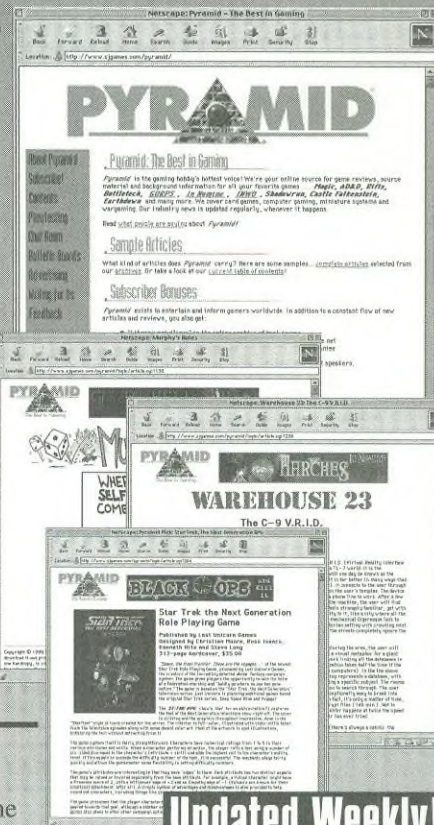
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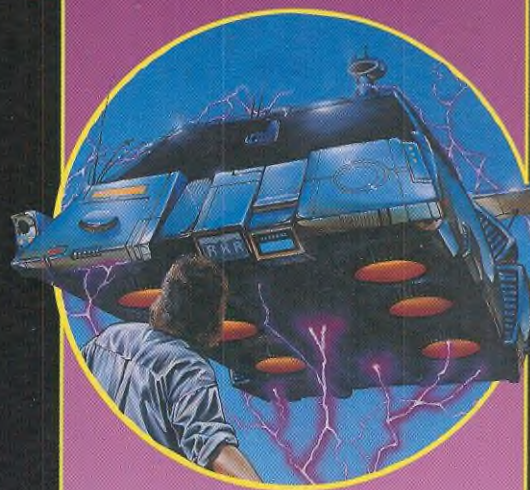
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THE ARCHITECTS:

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Steven Marsh
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Written by
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Cover by
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Illustrated by
Guy Burwell,
Eric Hotz,
and **Dan Smith**

FIRST EDITION
PUBLISHED FEBRUARY 2001
ISBN 1-55634-494-5



9 781556 344947

SJG02095 **6129**

Printed in the
USA