



Back into the Cube

An Alternate Campaign for *GURPS Time Travel* and *Places of Power*

by Baeda

This article gives more structure and purpose to the time traveling campaign found in *GURPS Time Travel* called "In the Cube" (p. 67). It also provides a setting which can incorporate some of the fascinating and mysterious places described in *GURPS Places of Mystery*. While this is written mainly as a campaign, it could be compressed and used as a short one-shot adventure.

The Problem

When the Wanderers get sucked into the Hypercube during the full-power test, they are transported to the date in the past to which the Team had set the Hypercube. Each successive attempt to bring them back home only sends them further and further into the past. They may begin to notice a pattern (or two) to their time jumps.

The first pattern is that each jump sends the Wanderers as far back into the past as they already were. So, if the Wanderers were originally based in 2001 and first jumped to 1789 to witness the French Revolution, then they were 212 years in the past. On their next jump, they will be sent 212 years more into the past, or to 1577. Further jumps would take them back to 1153 (424 years from 1577), 305 AD, 1391 BC, and so forth. Whether or not they discover the progression, it should be obvious to them that they are moving further and further into the past. (If the GM prefers, this numerical progression can be ignored -- the important thing is that the Wanderers are moving further away from home with each jump.)

The second, and more important pattern, is that each time the Wanderers arrive in a new time, they find themselves in one of the locations found in *GURPS Places of Mystery*. The nature and type of the locations should be different enough that the pattern does not become too obvious until after a few jumps (for example, they shouldn't land in a temple or church every time).

The Solution

The Hypercube cannot get a close enough fix upon the Wanderers to transfer them back, and the further back in time they are, the more difficult is the fix. Thus each failure results in sending the Wanderers as far back into the past as they already were, relative to where they were before the jump. When the Hypercube tries to fix upon and transfer people within too large and unfocused an area, it fails in mid-transfer lacking the energy to complete the transfer. Rather than just wasting all the built up energy for the transfer following the failure, the energy is put to use by the Hypercube to send the Wanderers back as far as they wanted to come forward.

As the Hypercube transfers the Wanderers, certain locations tend to attract the matter which has newly entered the time sphere. If one were to view it from the perspective of an electron, it would look almost like the forces of electro-magnetic attraction. These places have an aura of energy about them, and might be called "places of power." Many of these places have become revered

over the years as holy places, since some people can sense the aura of energy. Some people have built edifices to cover, surround or adorn them. Many of these places are now marked in some way, and are described in *GURPS Places of Mystery*. These places of power can include anything the GM chooses; any place or building considered to be "holy" by any religion was probably felt to radiate an aura of energy, as well as certain natural locations (like mountain tops) which can be said to radiate such an aura.

The solution to the Wanderer's problem is to place themselves on or within such places of power. This allows the Hypercube to fix on them more accurately and bring them forward in time. In fact, if the Wanderers could just stay in the same place as they landed, they would move forward on their next jump. Unfortunately, something usually comes up which forces the Wanderers to move from their landing location.

Once the PCs (Wanderers or the Team back at home) discover the pattern, and place themselves in places of power for their transfers, they will start to move forward in their jumps. They will move forward at the same rate they moved back, only in reverse (ie. they will move back half of the time distance from their home time; round fractions down). This will allow the PCs to revisit every time they have previously visited (sometimes arriving at the same location as before, sometimes at another location in the same time), which could present its own difficulties. The Wanderers will jump forward at this same rate until the time difference between their current location and home time is a prime number (to simplify and shorten this process, just make it an odd number).

As described in the *GURPS Time Travel* campaign "In the Cube," it is possible to communicate with the PCs, and even send them equipment, with this minor snag: The further in the past they are, the harder it is to make a direct fix on the party unless they are located in a place of power. What this means, in practical terms, is that the calculations required for the Team at home to make contact with the Wanderers after a jump is subject to one further calculation: multiply the number of hours required to make contact by the number of years into the past the Wanderers are, divided by 500 (rounded up). Essentially, this means that you increase the multiplier by one every 500 years. Thus a party 500-1000 years in the past must multiply the time required by 2.

Sending matter to the Wanderers is even more problematic. The further back in time they are, the wider is the area of possible delivery, unless the wanderers are in a place of power. For every year in the past, the possible delivery area increases by a radius of a foot. Thus, when the Team sends matter 100 years into the past, it will land within 100 cubic feet of the Wanderers (this might mean the materials "land" anywhere up to 100 feet above them, or even 100 feet below them, requiring them to dig them up, as well as up to 100 feet in any horizontal direction). When contact is re-established after the transfer of materials, the Team at home will be able to locate the "package" and direct the Wanderers to it, but by the time they get to it, it may have been found by someone else already, and be under investigation or guard!

Running the Campaign

At the character creation session to start the campaign, tell the players to design scientists who work on a time travel machine. Then ask them where they would want to go on their first foray into the past. When they come back for the next session, you can begin like this: "Today is the big day - - you're going to power up the Hypercube. Soon it will be ready for 'live' testing, but today is just a warm up. As the test begins, the guy at the controls asks you what date to put into the machine -- 'just for fun,' he says. You tell him [the date the players gave you at the first session], with a laugh. The next thing you know, you are being dragged into a vacuum created by the Hypercube." For their first adventure, the players will get to experience the time and place they chose. After that, they will have no control over where they land.

Once begun, this campaign does not differ too much in style and function from what is presented in "In the Cube." It will still center mainly on the Wanderers' survival from jump to jump, and the real

action may take place while they are out of contact with the Team back home. The real difference is the potential difficulties that could arise if the Wanderers go too far back in time -- for example, having to traipse halfway across the earth in dinosaur times to retrieve "a package from home." If they go too far back it might become more difficult to find places of power, since there won't be any buildings before humans. The GM should play up this danger as the PCs get further and further in the past.

Further Possibilities

The Director of the TRU

If all the PCs are going to be Wanderers, then it might simplify things for them to deal with a single individual (who has research assistants, of course). That individual could be one Niels Johannson.

Dr. Niels Johannson (100 pts)

5'11", 150 lbs blue eyes, blond hair, Scandinavian features, usually dressed in suit and lab coat.

ST 10 [0] **DX** 9 [-10] **IQ** 15 [60] **HT** 10 [0]

Speed: 4.75 Move: 4

Advantages: Literacy [0], Lightning Calculator [5], Reputation (+2 among other scientists and academics) [7]

Disadvantages: Impulsiveness [-10], Stubbornness [-5]

Quirks: Wants to achieve fame as a great scientist (like Newton or Einstein); Always wears a three button suit under his lab coat; Has trouble falling asleep at night; A little clumsy; Likes to read history. [-5]

Skills: Mathematics-14 [2], Computer Operation/TL8-15 [1], Computer Programming/TL8-12 [.5], Electronics-15 [4], Electronics Operation/TL8-15 [2], Electrical Engineering/TL8-16 [6] Physics/TL8-16 [8], Nuclear Physics/TL8-15 [8], Temporal Electronics/TL8-15 [4], Temporal Operation-15 [2], Temporal Physics-15 [8], Swimming-10 [2], Skiing - 10 [8]

Languages: Swedish (Native)-15 [0], English (MA)-14 [1], German (MA)-14 [1], French (MA)-13 [.5]

Dr. Johannson is the stereotypical scientist: all brains, no brawn. Born in Sweden to a father who was a chemist and a mother who taught mathematics at the secondary level, he discovered early on his natural ability with mathematics, and a love for designing and building machines. He also enjoyed reading history books, but only when he couldn't get his hands on the materials to build a new machine he had dreamt up. Even in his younger years, he rarely made himself available for outside activities, preferring his machines and his theories, but his parents did make him take swimming lessons as a kid, and later they took him on vacation skiing trips where he managed, despite a slight natural tendency towards clumsiness, to learn to stay up on the skis and make it to the bottom of the hill.

By the time he reached college, he had decided to study electrical and computer engineering. In the course of his studies he was introduced to the field of temporal physics, still in its infancy, but growing. When he decided to continue his studies with post-graduate work, he applied to work and study under an American professor at an American university, where there was more funding for such specialized fields than in Sweden. By the time he had earned his PhD, he had become one of the leading experts in time travel theory, and wanted to begin working to make it a reality. He

joined the Time Research Unit, but after several years of all discussing theory, he, along with a few others, decided to do something about it. With all of his experience with both electrical and temporal engineering, he naturally become the leader of the small group which eventually built the Hypercube. It was his impulsive nature which led him to join the group which built the Hypercube, and it may have been his impulsive nature which led him to try the full- power test against the advice of the others and which ultimately led to the "accident." He now stubbornly refuses to accept the loss of those who were sucked in, and keeps trying to bring them back, despite the repeated failures.

Quotes: "This time it will work, you'll see!"

"Someday, they'll repeat my name along with those of Isaac Newton and Albert Einstein!"

What if creation "ex nihilo" is true?

If the assertion by some religions that the earth is only about 6000 years old today, and was created "ex nihilo" (out of nothing), is true the campaign world, then what happens when the Wanderers are sent back further in time than that? Perhaps the Hypercube cannot find a location for them and so they are stuck in limbo forever, or at least until a team (new PCs run by the old players?) can figure out how to rescue them. Perhaps they are transported to the next closest place of power -- in another galaxy! Or maybe they just land in empty space, dying after a couple of minutes of no oxygen, or maybe they are rescued by a passing starship just in the nick of time. This could transform the campaign into a *Space* campaign.

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