

PYRAMID[®]

Issue 3/20 June '10

INFINITE WORLDS



ROMA UNIVERSALIS
by Ken Spencer

MORE HELL PARALLELS
by Stephen Dedman

THE RED ROCKETS' GLARE
by J. Edward Tremlett

CYBERME
by Mark Gellis

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CONTENTS

FROM THE EDITOR	3
INFINITE TELEPORTATION.....	4
<i>by Jason "PK" Levine</i>	
ROMA UNIVERSALIS.....	8
<i>by Ken Spencer</i>	
THE RED ROCKETS' GLARE.....	15
<i>by J. Edward Tremlett</i>	
CYBERME	23
<i>by Mark Gellis</i>	
MORE HELL PARALLELS	29
<i>by Stephen Dedman</i>	
RANDOM THOUGHT TABLE: AN INFINITE ROAD MAP.....	36
<i>by Steven Marsh, Pyramid Editor</i>	
ODDS AND ENDS	38
<i>featuring Murphy's Rules</i>	
ABOUT GURPS.....	39

INFINITE WORLDS™

Article Colors

Each article is color-coded to help you find your favorite sections.

Pale Blue: In This Issue

Brown: In Every Issue (letters, humor, editorial, etc.)

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IN THIS ISSUE

If you want to try filling up a campaign with a name like *Infinite Worlds*, you're going to need a *lot* of alternate Earths to do the job. Fortunately, this issue has a bunch of new timelines that can expand that setting or serve as excellent adventuring possibilities on their own. Choose which of these worlds you incorporate into your own campaign and how you do it; the possibilities are Infinite!

Of course, you have to know how to get there first. Forget technology and start using your head! Jason "PK" Levine, author of *GURPS Psionic Powers*, expands one of the most popular forms of psi in *Infinite Teleportation*. New Teleportation abilities, perks, and psi techniques cover everything from world-hopping to bullet-dodging.

What happens when you mix 1940s science fiction with ancient Rome? Legionnaires in space! Sapient lizards from Venus, multi-limbed Martian masterminds, moondragons, and flying galleys – *Roma Universalis* has it all.

One small step for . . . the proletariat! If the Soviets could have worked together, they might have beaten the Americans in the race to the moon – and there are worlds in an infinite cosmos where they *did*. The Cold War meets the chill of space in *The Red Rockets' Glare*.

When high-action anime and cyberpunk collide, the results are enough to send citizens fleeing to their corporate-controlled homes. Learn more about how to survive in this world – as well as *GURPS* templates for vampires and cat people – in *Cyberme*.

For some folks, Mondays are hell – and so are Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays . . . Learn about some of the least hospitable spots in the cosmos in *More Hell Parallels*, including *GURPS* information for an alternate Leonardo da Vinci's more impressive gear.

Our fun-hopping feats continue with *Odds and Ends* (including *Murphy's Rules*) and the editor's *Random Thought Table*. With this issue of *Pyramid*, there's a world of possibilities – and another – and another . . .

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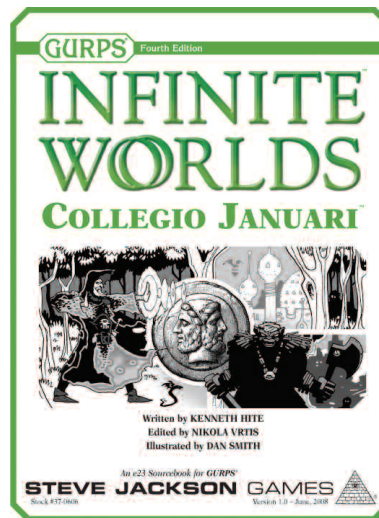
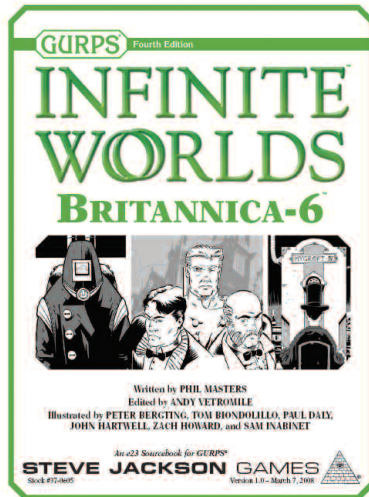
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FROM THE EDITOR

... TAKE ONE DOWN, PASS IT AROUND, INFINITE BOTTLES OF BEER ON THE WALL ...

This month's issue is devoted to *Infinite Worlds*, the default campaign included with *GURPS Fourth Edition*. In many ways it suits *GURPS*' generic status – at its core, the *Infinite Worlds* seems to say, “Yep, I can handle whatever you throw at me!” By creating a campaign where it's at least possible to mix in just about every other existing world, *GURPS* can really flex its conceptual muscles. (I remember being amused when I read the box included with *GURPS Thaumatology: Alchemical Baroque* providing information on how to insert that strange fairy-tale land into the *Infinite Worlds* setting.)

The *Infinite Worlds* are also interesting in that, for the most part, anything you toss into it can be taken out; most alternate worlds are perfectly logical and workable as standalone campaign settings outside the needs of the *Infinite Worlds* setting. Sure, some worlds work best as one-shot “conundrums” the heroes need to figure out and then depart (such as *More Hell Parallels*, pp. 29-35), but on the whole, most of these worlds serve perfectly well as stand-alone settings. Regardless of whether it's near-modern U.S./USSR



spy-game espionage (pp. 15-22), Leonardo da Vinci tech vs. zombies (pp. 29-30), or low-tech Romans roaming the solar system (pp. 8-13), many possibilities herein work great even if you never utter phrases like “Homeline” or “Centrum.” Compare this with other multi-world RPGs, and often none of the core worlds functions as well standalone.

So, even if you don't make *GURPS Infinite Worlds* your

campaign of choice, there's still a strong chance that you can incorporate something here into a standalone campaign, one-shot adventure, or ongoing setting. After all, even in a setting without codified alternate worlds, mighty magic or *Matrix*-like hallucination can still generate what seems like other worlds ...

WRITE HERE, WRITE NOW

Of course, in a universe with limitless possibilities, you've undoubtedly come up with alternate uses for the worlds described herein – or even come up with your own. If so, send us a note at pyramid@sjgames.com, or visit our timeline database at forums.sjgames.com.

If you'd like to try your hand at writing for us, we're always happy to consider ideas for upcoming issues. Familiarize yourself with the writing guidelines at sjgames.com/pyramid/writing.html, then send your query to the address above.

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INFINITE TELEPORTATION

BY JASON “PK” LEVINE

When it comes to psionic powers, none are more blatant, more unpredictable, and more potentially game-breaking than teleportation. That may be what makes it so appealing: the ability to travel anywhere with a thought, effortlessly crossing all barriers and borders . . . it's the ultimate expression of freedom.

This guaranteed teleportation a spot in *GURPS Psionic Powers* (pp. 68-71), but it did end up with fewer abilities than any other powers. This is because fiction rarely takes a wide view in this respect – psis can 'port themselves or 'port others . . . and that's about it. These new *optional* abilities (which use the format described on *Psionic Powers*, p. 22) look at teleportation from a few different points of view, adding some variety to an already fun power. While some of these were crafted with the *Infinite Worlds* setting in mind, most can be used in any campaign with little to no adjustment needed.

“Is it even possible?” I asked.

“Teleportation?”

“Yeah.”

*“Theoretically, yes. Practically,
I have no idea.”*

*– Kelly Meding,
Three Days to Dead*

Blink Missiles

9 points/level*

Skill: Blink Missiles (Will/Hard), optional, used for power defense, psi techniques, etc.

When successfully attacked by one or more physical, ranged projectiles (e.g., bullets, arrows, thrown weapons), you can

instinctively teleport them just far enough to the side to help you get out of their way. You *must* be the target of the missiles to have this effect, and you have no control over how exactly the missiles are relocated. This does not affect their trajectory in any meaningful way – they are moved several inches at the most and continue to fly in the same direction. Anyone watching carefully must make a Vision roll at -4 (plus penalties for range, darkness, etc.) to realize that anything weird just happened.

There is no roll to use this ability. Instead, each level adds +1 to your Dodge rolls against appropriate attacks. If you are in a position where you cannot dodge, Blink Missiles is not powerful enough to help you.

* The GM must set the maximum number of levels for this ability in his campaign. The recommended limit is half the psi's Teleportation Talent (rounded up), plus one. In a typical campaign with up to four levels of Talent, that allows for 1-3 levels of Blink Missiles.

Statistics: Enhanced Dodge (Limited, Missiles, -40%; Low Signature, +10%; Teleportation, -10%) [9/level].

Save Other

Hard

Default: Blink Missiles-9; cannot exceed Blink Missiles.

When a friend is attacked, you may use this technique to grant him the benefits of this ability for one defense. Roll against the psi technique, plus the range penalty (p. B550) to your friend; if successful, he gets your Dodge bonus against the incoming missiles. This does not remove your Dodge bonus this turn. You may only help a single person in this manner.

Warp Field

Hard

Default: Blink Missiles-2; cannot exceed Blink Missiles.

You can get your Dodge bonus against *any* ranged attack, including energy weapons, by creating a momentary “warp field” around yourself instead of affecting the individual projectiles. This is somewhat obvious – there is no -4 penalty to an observer's Vision rolls to notice.

Teleportation abilities have the potential to be some of the most disruptive in a campaign; GURPS Psionic Campaigns offers advice for keeping troublesome psi abilities in check.

New Autoteleport Techniques

These psi techniques for the Autoteleport ability supplement the ones found in *Psiionic Powers* (p. 68).

Multiport

Hard

Default: Autoteleport-10; cannot exceed Autoteleport.

You can make multiple teleports, one right after the other, all in a fraction of a second. Apply all normal teleportation modifiers, using the distance of the single longest jump. Success means you make your first “hop,” plus additional jumps equal to your margin of success, to a maximum of 15 total ‘ports.

Example: Freida has a range of only 100 yards, but needs to get to the roof of a building a quarter-mile away *immediately*. She plans to hop to the top of a nearby building (80 yards) then make four 100-yard hops downtown, ending on the right rooftop. She concentrates, then rolls at Multiport-2 (-0 for one second of concentration and -2 because the longest hop is 100 yards). She succeeds by 3, which lets her make the first four hops. Unfortunately, that places her on a rooftop about 100 yards away from her goal.

Not only is this a way for a short-range ‘porter to cover ground quickly, it also allows for surprise strikes. You can use Multiport to jump, attack, jump, attack, and so on. Note that this does not give you any additional actions! Unless you have Extra Attack, you’ll need to use All-Out Attack (Double) and/or Rapid Strike to attack more than once in a turn.

Tunneling

Hard

Default: Autoteleport-4; cannot exceed Autoteleport.

You may leave a tunnel behind after you teleport. It lingers for 3d seconds and is very obvious. Anyone who wishes may pass through it to follow you. This can be a quick and easy way to take your friends with you, but it also allows any nearby enemies to do the same! You cannot close the tunnel early or filter who is allowed through. For an additional -6 penalty (which can be bought off), you may open such a tunnel *without* first teleporting; if so, you can choose whether to pass through it, just like anyone else.

Personal Recall

28/32/36/40/44/48/52/56/60/64/68/112 points for levels 1-12, plus 4 points for each additional level
Skill: Personal Recall (IQ/Hard).

You can teleport any piece of your own equipment into your hand, regardless of the distance between you. You do not need to be able to see the item or know where it is. If someone has stolen it from you, this is an easy way to get it back, but it does not work on any item you have freely given away (including money)! This ability assumes a weak psychic bond between you and your gear, which is broken when it changes ownership.

This requires 10 seconds of concentration, after which you must pay 2 FP and make a skill roll. There is no penalty for distance, though you cannot teleport the item across dimensions (e.g., into the astral plane). You must have a hand free with which to make a “reaching” motion; otherwise, the roll is at -3. Success brings a small item into your hand or a large item on the floor nearby, within arm’s reach. Failure is treated normally, except that FP and skill penalties for repeated attempts within the hour are *doubled*. Once you have retrieved a piece of equipment, you may send it back at any time, with no skill roll or FP cost required.

The piece of equipment you teleport cannot exceed your weight limit, as shown on the table below. This limit is per-piece, not total; for example, at level 3 you couldn’t recall an entire belt of grenades, but you could bring them to your hand, one at a time, until you had the whole set.

Level	Limit	Level	Limit	Level	Limit
1	1 oz.	8	10 lbs.	15	150 lbs.
2	4 oz.	9	15 lbs.	16	200 lbs.
3	1 lb.	10	20 lbs.	17	300 lbs.
4	2 lbs.	11	30 lbs.	18	500 lbs.
5	3 lbs.	12	50 lbs.	19	700 lbs.
6	5 lbs.	13	70 lbs.	20	1,000 lbs.
7	7 lbs.	14	100 lbs.	21	1,500 lbs.

Further levels continue this progression, with every six levels multiplying capacity by 10.

Note that this ability overlaps heavily with, but is distinct from, Exoteleport. Most psis who have both will take the two as alternative abilities.

Statistics: Snatcher (Accessibility, Not across dimensions, -10%; Improved, +10%; Less Weight, 1 oz., -30%; Recall, -25%; Teleportation, -10%) [28]. Improved is borrowed from Jumper. Further levels reduce Less Weight, followed by adding More Weight, one level at a time [+4/level]. Level 12 *also* adds Large Items [+40].

Cross-Dimension Recall

Hard

Default: Personal Recall-1; cannot exceed Personal Recall.

You can summon equipment from one dimension to another. For example, in the *Infinite Worlds* setting, you could recall equipment from another world, regardless of which quantum it is in, at no additional penalty.

If at least one member of the party has teleportation, someone can escape for help in a crisis. If someone has Quantum-Jumping (p. 6), they can go really far afield for help!

If you use this technique while astrally projecting, the Astral Accessory perk is necessary to summon gear to your spirit-self; otherwise, successful use will summon the gear into the hand of your unconscious *physical* body. Note that sending the item back (across dimensions) requires the use of this technique again.

Fast Recall

Hard

Default: Personal Recall-8; cannot exceed Personal Recall.

You can summon your gear with just one second of concentration instead of 10. For an additional -4 penalty (which cannot be bought off), you can summon it as a free action, even when it's not your turn; for example, you could summon a weapon fast enough to parry an incoming attack.

New Teleportation Perks

Clear Blockage: You may clear a stoppage or misfire malfunction (p. B407) with a single Concentrate maneuver and a successful roll against the better of Armoury, Blink Missiles, Exoteleport, or Personal Recall. Be sure your GM is using the (optional) malfunction rules before taking this perk!

Tele-Throw: As you throw something, you can reflexively "blink" it forward so that it travels farther. When throwing objects (p. B355) or weapons, multiply your effective ST by 1.2 (round up) for the purpose of calculating distance. This does not affect damage!

Teleport Trigger: You may set up a "trigger" – an event which, when it occurs, will cause you to instantly Autoteleport to a certain location, regardless of your condition or turn sequence. This is not automatic; you must roll against your Autoteleport skill, but you are at +5 to skill instead of the normal -5 for lack of concentration time. If the location is out of your range, nothing happens. You may define *one* event and *one* location per perk – for example, Teleport Trigger (When I fall unconscious, I teleport to my garage). Changing either or both requires a full day of meditation in the new location. You may switch your trigger on or off with a Concentrate maneuver.

a ride" with another quantum-jumper by touching him as he leaps, if his destination is within your limits; this does not cost you FP or require a skill roll or concentration.

At level 1 you must concentrate for 10 minutes before jumping, and you may only travel to worlds in the same quantum that you're currently in. With level 2, this becomes 70 seconds of concentration and you may jump to worlds up to one quantum away. At level 3, you only require 20 seconds of concentration and may jump up to two quanta away. Level 4 is listed here as a theoretical ability – it requires no concentration and has no quantum limit; always consult with the GM before taking it, as it may not be available or may require an Unusual Background. In all cases, you may shave off one second of concentration for every -1 penalty you take to your skill roll.

Regardless of your power level, a jump within the same quantum costs 1 FP and has no skill penalty. A one-quantum jump costs 3 FP and is done at -5 to skill, while a two-quanta jump costs 7 FP and is -10 to skill. (In theory, three-quanta would be 15 FP and -15 to skill, four-quanta would be 30 FP and -20 to skill, and so on, with the FP cost doubling and the skill penalty growing by -5 every quantum.)

In a multidimensional setting other than *Infinite Worlds*, the GM should replace "quantum" with whatever the setting uses to measure dimensional "distance," defining the levels as traversing whatever would be a short (level 1), medium (2), long (3), or infinite (4) distance for the setting in question.

Statistics: Jumper (World; Immediate Preparation Required, 10 Minutes, -45%; Improved, +10%; Limited Quanta, Same Quantum, -15%; Teleportation, -10%) [40]. Further levels reduce Limited Quanta to One Quantum and Immediate Preparation Required to 1 Minute [60], then reduce Limited Quanta to Two Quanta and replace Immediate Preparation Required with Takes Extra Time 1 [85], then remove Limited Quanta and Takes Extra Time and add Faster Concentration 5 [125].

Quantum-Jumping

40/60/85/125 points for levels 1-4

Skill: Quantum-Jumping (IQ/Hard).

You can physically travel between worlds. This requires concentration, spending FP, and a successful skill roll. If successful, you (and equipment up to your No Encumbrance level) immediately disappear from the world you're in and reappear in the same location on the new world. If there is no corresponding safe location in the new world within 100 yards, you cannot spend enough FP, or your skill roll fails, nothing happens. On a critical failure, you end up on whatever world the GM wants!

You can only jump to worlds you've traveled to, unless you use the Exploration psi technique. Alternatively, you can "hitch

Bulk Compensation

Hard

As for the Autoteleport technique (*Psonic Powers*, p. 68). If you add enough capacity, you can carry a person, but under no circumstances can you carry more than one.

Exploration

Hard

Default: Quantum-Jumping-8; cannot exceed Quantum-Jumping.

You can jump to a world you've never visited, based on just a description. You must at least know its quantum (which must be within your limit) and as much information as would be in a Penetration Survey summary (*Infinite Worlds*, p. 17).

If the entire party consists of quantum-jumpers, the whole campaign can be much more free and open-ended (see Random Thought Table: An Infinite Road Map, pp. 36-37, for ideas). Of course, such heroes are likely to have enemies interested in "researching" them for insights into their amazing abilities.

Less information cause additional penalties, at the GM's discretion. The normal skill penalties for crossing quanta apply and the base FP cost (but not the FP cost for this technique) is *doubled*.

If you are holding a physical object from the world *or* if you have Intuitive Mathematician and are able to study the world's complete quantum coordinates (which can be exported as a *very* long spreadsheet) while concentrating, your Exploration roll is made at +4. This cannot push your Exploration technique level above your Quantum-Jumping skill level.

Reality Stabilization

23/31/38/46/53 points for levels 1-5,
plus 3 points for each additional level

Skill: Reality Stabilization (IQ/Hard).

You can soften or strengthen reality nearby, affecting how easy it is for a 'porter to target anything (or anyone) nearby. *Softening* reality adds +5 to the effective skill of any teleporter trying to use Autoteleport, Combat Teleport, Quantum-Jumping, or similar abilities to enter the area (regardless of his origin) or trying to use Exoteleport, Innerportation, Personal Recall, or similar abilities on a target within the area (regardless of where he's sending it to). *Strengthening* reality works identically, but causes a -5 penalty to effective skill instead.

Stabilizing reality requires a skill roll. If successful, you affect an area centered on yourself, with a radius equal to your power level in yards. This lasts for as long as you concentrate. You may switch back and forth between softening and strengthening, but each switch demands a Concentrate maneuver and a skill roll.

Reality Stabilization only affects other psis; you can never use it to modify your own teleportation skills. Each overlapping area of *similar* stabilization increases the bonus or penalty by 1 (e.g., if three psis stood together and softened reality, it would give a +7 bonus to anyone teleporting into their overlapping area). *Opposing* areas which overlap cancel each other out completely – a soft area negates a strengthened one.

Statistics: Control Teleportation 1 (Emanation, -20%; Teleportation, -10%) [11] + Control Teleportation 4 (Does not increase area of effect, -50%; Emanation, -20%; Teleportation, -10%) [12]. Levels 2-5 remove "Does not increase area of effect" from 1 [+8], then 2 [+7], then 3 [+8], then 4 [+7] levels of the extra Control. Further levels add Control Teleportation (Emanation, -20%; Only increases area of effect, -50%; Teleportation, -10%) [+3/level].

Establish Field

Hard

Default: Reality Stabilization-6; cannot exceed Reality Stabilization.

You can affect an area, and then walk away without further concentration. Your margin of success determines how long the stabilization field remains: 0-1 is 30 seconds of duration; 2-3 is 1.5 minutes; 4-5 is five minutes; 6-7 is 15 minutes; 8-9 is an hour; and 10+ is three hours.

Projection

Hard

Default: Reality Stabilization-6; cannot exceed Reality Stabilization.

You can stabilize a distant area instead of having it centered on yourself. Apply standard range penalties (p. B550) to this roll, and use the *Scatter* rules (p. B414) if you fail due to the range penalty but would have succeeded otherwise.

Quick-Switch

Hard

Default: Reality Stabilization-4; cannot exceed Reality Stabilization.

Use this technique to switch between softening and strengthening as a free action. You must be currently stabilizing an area. If successful, you may switch instantly, even if it is not your turn. For example, you may make the area soft to help a friendly 'porter join you, then Quick-Switch to strong the moment he arrives, to penalize the enemies following via Tracking (*Psionic Powers*, p. 68).

Control (Psi)

The "psionic energy" emitted by psychics may *optionally* be as susceptible to Control as any other energy or force. This is the assumption behind Reality Stabilization (above). If the GM allows this, psionic energy is *common*, the energy from a given power is *occasional*, and that of one specific ability is *rare*.

This form of Control can be used to give a bonus or penalty equal to its level to any *external* use of psi, as long as the psi's target is in the affected area. (The psi's location is irrelevant.) It has no effect if the psi is targeting *himself*; note that teleportation is assumed to be targeting the destination for these purposes. For example, Control Telepathy 3 could give a -3 penalty or a +3 bonus to telepaths using Telereceive on anyone in the area. Alternatively, if the framework in *Psionic Powers* is being used, Control (Psi) can affect the subject's power level *instead of* skill – if used this way, every 10 full levels of Control provides +1 or -1 to power. None of the other *Effects of Control* (*GURPS Powers*, p. 91) are possible.

Because Control (Psi) can only target externally generated energy, a psi can never use it to affect his own abilities.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Reverend Pee Kitty, sometimes known as "Jason Levine," has spent the past 30 years training his psychic abilities at a hidden monastery in Malaysia. There, the centuries-old monks taught him the ancient secrets of unlocking the secret powers of the mind. Equipped with this forbidden knowledge, he returned to his home country, where he was instrumental in preventing three world wars and single-handedly keeping the economy afloat during its greatest moment of need. His job done, he retired to a life of leisure, occasionally taking time to explain how to translate his supernatural powers into *GURPS* terms. (Or . . . not.)

ROMA UNIVERSALIS

BY **KEN SPENCER**

Flavius Marcus looked up from the paperwork before him, his well-worn quill hovering above the parchment. There was the sound of a commotion out in the central square of the small colony town he governed. Flavius looked up at his bodyguard and raised one eyebrow; the big Venusian nodded and stepped out into the hall.

A few minutes later the eight-foot reptilian sauntered back in, saluted with his hasta across his chest, and spoke with that distinctive Venusian accent that Flavius found so grating. "Mastsster, the colonissstsss are beginning to riot. They demand you bring in more womenssss."

"Jove take them, I told the Senate this would be an issue when they planned to disband an entire legion so far from home, and with no suitable native women. What did they think; the average citizen was as perverse as they? To mix with Martian females so, it's just disgusting."

Outside, the sound of rioting ex-legionaries grew louder; already things were crashing down in the market.

"Send for Tribune Aurelius; have him call out the auxiliaries. No need for Roman to spill Roman blood today." The Venusian saluted again and left the room. Human blood seemed too precious to spill in quantity, and so he must pass the order for other humans to send his brothers of the III Venusia to spill theirs. Curse these Romans, curse their sky galleys, and curse this dry and dusty world called Mars.

III Venusia received the orders from Tribune Aurelius with disgusted hissings and grunts while they shrugged into their harness and weapons. As they moved into the central square to put down the riot, word passed from warrior to warrior: "Let's teach these soft-skinned humans a lesson about Venusian retribution."

It is 922 by the calendar kept in Rome (168 A.D. according to Homeline), the capital of an empire that spans across much of the earth and reaches out to the stars. Roman sky galleys travel on the winds from the silk port of Wuhan in the east to the furthest terrestrial reaches of Roman might – the small frontier outpost of Pellis Urbs, far across the western sea. City fortifications are no match for Roman air superiority, as sky galleys drop rocks and legionaries behind the walls. Roman explorers have flow beyond the sands of the Sahara and have established trade with the kingdoms of central Africa. The vast wilds of the north have been ignored as they offer little in the

way of riches beyond the fur and amber trade; the wealth and power of Rome is more than enough to keep that region's barbaric peoples at bay.

The sky galleys have enabled the Empire to expand beyond these terrestrial conquests and reap the treasures of the stars themselves. The first voyage to the moon was over a century ago, and Luna Urbs is the main jumping-off point for trade and conquest throughout the solar system. The jungles of Venus held little reward for the first explorers, but latter expeditions returned with bizarre creatures for spectacles in the arena. The greatest find on that hot and humid world was the native Venusians, a tall and powerfully built warrior race of reptile men. Venusian auxiliaries are now a common feature of the legions and serve as the Empire's premier shock troops. Mars proved to be a wealthier planet filled with gold and gems; it also featured a more comfortable climate. The native Martians are a strange race whose advanced sciences and learning have been absorbed by the Empire. Unfortunately for the Martians, their ways are peaceful and proved no match for the Empire's legions, both human and Venusian.

Mercury turned out to be too hot and worthless to bother with, but Roman explorers have pressed on to the asteroid field and beyond. There they found empty rocks devoid of life, but a few larger asteroids held pockets of air and primitive life forms. Today, the bravest adventurers are not spending their time mapping Mars' deserts or Venus' jungles, but are instead pushing their sky galleys to the limits and striving to reach the outer planets.

We find that the Romans owed the conquest of the world to no other cause than continual military training, exact observance of discipline in their camps, and unwearied cultivation of the other arts of war.

– Publius Flavius Vegetius Renatus

Unless otherwise noted, all years here are Ab Urbe Condita – Latin for "from the founding of the City" (that is, from the founding of Rome).

INFINITE WORLDS

Roma Universalis is a weird alternate Earth on Quantum 7, difficult for Homeline to reach but easier for Centrum. The world was discovered five years ago by a routine Patrol Survey team that was at first ready to write it off as an echo, until they bumped into a patrician being carried on a litter by four big Venusians. The timeline has since been classified as closed to all but research due to the peculiar physical impossibilities found there. Venus, Mars, Mercury, and the moon should not have breathable atmospheres, much less advanced life. The void between planets is not supposed to be filled with a breathable semi-liquid called the Divium Mare. Galleys simply should not fly, powered by sails and great, membranous oars. On Roma Universalis, they do, and that disturbs the scientists on Homeline quite a bit.

Roma Universalis can be used as either a stand-alone campaign setting of high planetary adventure set during the height of the Roman Empire, or as a timeline for *GURPS Infinite Worlds*. As the latter, there is plenty of intrigue to be had, as both Homeline and Centrum are very interested in not just the whys of how “normal” laws of physics seem to be broken here, but also the alien species found on Venus and Mars. Are there other alternates where these aliens are dominant and not humanity? If so, what danger does this pose to The Secret? Both parties, as well as the Cabal, want to procure samples of the Elixir of Daedalus, though early samples of treated wood seem to not possess any anti-gravity properties outside of the Roma Universalis timeline.

RISE OF THE SKY GALLEYS

In 766 (local calendar), Akakios of Athens perfected his Elixir of Daedalus, a complex process that makes wood lighter than air and allows thin membranes to interact with the exotic matter known as the aether (the same matter that fills the Divium Mare). The process is expensive and time consuming, but the results are spectacular. A galley made from materials using Akakios’ processes can rise off the ground and propel itself with sails or oars across the sky. The first sky galley lifted off from Athens and flew to Rome, where the greatly impressed Emperor Augustus rewarded Akakios for his invention, and then promptly confiscated the galley, the inventor, and the formula. Flight would be entirely a Roman enterprise from that point on, and the formula for the Elixir of Daedalus, a closely guarded state secret.

Augustus did not live long enough to see his new acquisition bear much fruit, but within a few years, Roman sky galleys came to dominate trade in the Mediterranean. Seaborne ships still managed to eke out a profit on short distance trade, but anything over a few hundred miles became the province of the sky galleys.

The next emperor, Tiberius, was content to stay in his palace at Capri and let the management of the growing empire rest in the hands of Sejanus Aelius Lucius, the Prefect of the Praetorians. Lucius was a man who could see the endless possibilities of air travel, and it was he who militarized

Roma Universalis, 168 A.D.

Current Affairs

A vigorous Roman Empire uses advances in aerial technology to spread across the globe and to the planets of the inner solar system.

Divergence Point

12 A.D.; Akakios of Athens develops a process to make wood lighter than air and propel ships through the air and into space. Later, the Flavians take hold of the Empire and rule for several generations.

Major Civilizations

Roman (empire with satellites), Chinese (empire with satellites), Indic (empire).

Great Powers

Roman Empire (dictatorship, CR3), Han Dynasty (dictatorship, CR5), Satavahana Empire (dictatorship, CR4).

Worldline Data

TL: 3[^]

Mana Level: No mana

Quantum: 7

Infinity Class: R3

Centrum Zone: Orange

the sky galleys. Soon, sky-galley-supported legions were pushing the boundaries of the Empire further east beyond the shores of the Mediterranean and into the rich lands of Parthia, Persia, and India. Cities fell after assault from above, opposing armies discovered there is nowhere to hide when Romans command the skies, and otherwise unassailable positions were simply bypassed.

Caligula’s Mad Scheme

In 792, Emperor Caligula (Gaius Julius Caesar Germanicus) ordered that an expedition be mounted to the moon. All saw this as madness; however, he was the emperor and to defy him was death. A sky galley was quickly outfitted with supplies and an all-volunteer crew. One of the Empire’s famed sky captains, a former gladiator named Popillius Bellus Sextus (nicknamed Armo Validus for his impressive strength) volunteered to lead the expedition. On the 16th day of Iunius, the sky galley *Apollo* lifted off from Rome and floated into the distance. Four days later, she touched down on the moon, having discovered that the sky oars worked with even greater efficiency in the semi-liquid that filled the space between planets.

To convert from A.U.C. to A.D., subtract 753 years. Thus, 922 A.U.C. = 168 A.D.

Armo Validus descended the rope ladder from the *Apollo* and set foot upon the dry and dusty lunar surface. There was no atmosphere to speak of; the Divium Mare was as breathable (if uncomfortable) here as on their journey from Earth. The expedition spent its time collecting interesting looking rocks and poking around in the many caves that lined the edges of the moon's craters.

It is in one of these caves that the Romans encountered their first signs of life: a juvenile moondragon that ate three crewmen before a centurion put it down with a well-placed pilum. The body was preserved in a vat of wine and brought back to Rome. The expedition returned to Earth on the 24th day of Iulius to great acclaim and the dubious thanks of the Emperor Caligula. Other expeditions would follow, and the *Apollo* would return to the moon six more times before crashing into the Adriatic during a storm.

The Elixir of Daedalus

Homeline scientists have been struggling to solve the issue of what the Elixir is and how it works. They have procured samples of treated wood and oar membranes, but have yet to find a clue as to the concoction's composition. Adventurers might be sent on a mission by Infinity (or hired by an outside faction) to steal a sample of the Elixir, or – better yet – a copy of the formula. Considering that the monopoly of air travel is the cornerstone of the Roman Empire, this should be a difficult assignment.

The Possibilities Are Endless

Caligula set about satisfying his whims by sending sky galleys off on ridiculous and ill-conceived missions. Most of these did not pay off, and many expensive ships were lost, but enough came back with tales of adventure and riches from foreign lands that Caligula is less known today for his madness than as the patron of an age of exploration. Sky galleys crossed the deserts of Africa and the mountains of India. They journeyed far across the endless expanse of the Atlantic to find the continent of Terra Novus. Flavian sky captains explored the moon, brought back Venusian warriors, conquered Mars, and gave up on Mercury. Sky galleys also disappeared into the unknown, bound for the poles, sent off into deep space, or lost somewhere over the forests of the north.

With the death of Nero in 790, a power vacuum developed in Rome, and in stepped the Flavians. Famous for their explorations, heroes of the people, and in command of several thousand screaming Venusian warriors, the Senate had no choice but to declare Flavius Iulius Appius Venusia emperor.

In 825, Jewish fanatics locked themselves into the impregnable fortress of Masada, only to find Venusian auxiliaries rappelling from sky galleys into the center of their defenses. The region was then forcefully pacified and permanently incorporated into the Empire. Other developments in that region, such as the growth of several messianic cults, did not go unnoticed by Rome, and in 832, Emperor Vespasian (Titus Flavius

Vespasianus) declared general amnesty for all religions within the Empire, provided they do not practice human sacrifice or plot treason against the Emperor. By that date, the eastern half of the Empire was awash in religious movements, with Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Zoroastrianism competing with the local gods and Greco-Roman mystery cults. Religious groups that cannot abide each other are relocated (voluntary or otherwise), and there are thriving Christian and Buddhist communities on Luna and Mars.

Roman citizenship has expanded to include every male within the Empire – every human male, that is. In 802, the Emperor declared that only humans could be citizens, and that Martians and Venusians are to be treated as clients and property respectively. Both races seemed unconcerned, as the Martians tend to ignore human authority (unless enforced by a sword) and the Venusians seem content with their role as shock troops and bodyguards. Following a destructive riot of Venusian gladiators in 791 (largely over their resentment at being “warriorssess for ssshowsess”), it is now forbidden by tradition and by law to use the alien warriors in the arena. There is a growing resentment among Venusians over their misuse as little more than cannon fodder by some commanders, but it remains to be seen if this will lead to a revolt by Rome's fiercest warriors.

ROME IN 922

Landlocked Rome is now a port city; its traditional water port at Ostia is now secondary to the great sky port built on the Aventine Hill. The city buzzes with trade and commerce from every end of the Empire, both terrestrial and off world. Venusian bodyguards are a common sight, as are visitors from throughout Europe, Africa, Persia, India, China, and Novus Terra. Strange and exotic beasts are seen daily in the Coliseum: lions, elephants, tigers, gorillas, bears, Martian lightning snakes, Venusian thunder dragons, and even stranger things. Silk from China and Mars, moon-diamond necklaces, tea and coffee from eastern lands, exotic furs from throughout the Empire and beyond, and slaves from Venus, the North, and Terra Novus have also shown up in the marketplace.

The current emperor, Flavius Camillus Gaius, rules from his palace on the Palatine Hill. The Flavian dynasty rules the Empire, which has brought needed stability to the terms of succession. Emperor Gaius relies heavily on his family's connections and wealth to maintain control, as well as a well-managed bureaucracy (largely comprised of minor family members and clients) to keep order and regulate an empire spanning three worlds.

Those who are in the wrong in matters of supreme importance are objects of pity rather than of hate.

– Flavius Claudius Julianus

If it's negative, subtract 1 more and treat as B.C.; there's no Year 0 in the Gregorian calendar! Thus, 750 A.U.C. = 4 B.C.

The Extent of the Empire

On Earth, the Roman Empire covers parts of three continents and has several outposts on a fourth. The center of the Empire is the city of Rome, a metropolis of nearly a million people spread across seven hills. The Empire has not expanded very far to the north; the current northeastern border runs along the Danube River. Beyond that line, there are several barbaric peoples, such as the various German tribes, the Dacians, and the Getae. In Western Europe, all of the Iberian Peninsula, Gaul, and the southern parts of the British Isles fall under direct Roman rule, with the regions of Caledonia and Hibernia as client states. The borders in Europe are manned by some of the best legions in the Empire, plus a large contingent of Venusian auxiliaries.

With the aid of Martian biotechnology, the Romans built a wall across the breadth of Britain in order to keep the savage Caledonians out. This wall, which runs along the same ground as Hadrian's Wall on Homeline, is a living creature nearly 100 miles long. The Martian Wall (as it is known) is capable of repairing itself, and it gives warnings of attack through a high-pitched screeching when approached by any with whom it is unfamiliar. Legionnaires assigned to this wall view it as a hardship posting, as dwelling in a live wall is disconcerting.

To the east, the Empire has stretched as far as the Himalaya Mountains; following the Kushan Wars of 798-805, it has begun to push south down the Indian subcontinent. The jungles of southern and eastern India have proven to be a daunting challenge for the human legionaries, but the Venusians are quite at home.

Although they do not share a common border, tensions are developing between the Roman Empire and the Han Dynasty in China. Roman merchants regularly stop at the eastern Han cities to trade for silk, tea, and spices. The sky galleys cut a year and a half off the old Silk Road journey, bypassing the various nomadic tribes that once preyed on the trade. Along the old Silk Road, Roman outposts and resupply points dot the landscape every 100 miles or so. This is seen as another hardship posting for the legions, and although important to trade, these outposts are largely on their own and see little regular support (and no Venusians at all).

The Sahara Desert, though not a physical barrier to the sky galleys, has proven to be a natural barrier for the Empire. Much like the forests to the north of the Empire, the savannah and jungles to the south of the desert present little incentive for conquest. Roman governors control the lands along the Nile River as far as the (now defeated) kingdom of Kush, and explorers have flown south to the great African lakes in search of the source of the Nile. The growing kingdom of Axum in Ethiopia serves as a Roman client state, as do the nascent kingdoms of western and central Africa.

Far across the Atlantic Ocean, Roman sky galleys have managed to make contact with peoples from a whole other continent. This land, called Novus Terra, is a wild and forested place whose natives seem primitive and barbarous to the Romans. Exotic furs and animals are the only exports from the small frontier town of Pellis Urbs. Explorers from there have

traveled along the coastline and explored inland in search of wealth and to further mankind's knowledge of the world, following first a long and eastward flowing river (the Beautiful River), and then the even larger southward flowing river that the Beautiful River empties into (the New Nile). So far, they have found little gold, but have heard rumors of great cities to the west and south.

Infinity, Centrum, and Rome

There are definite signs of Centrum involvement on Roma Universalis, but no concrete proof to date. The bureaucracy of the Empire is far more developed than it was in Homeline's history, and authority is more centrally held. Also, a strong sense of merit as the defining means of advancement has begun to take shape in the government and among the common people. If Centrum is pushing for the Empire to become this Earth's planetwide government, the question is why? What would they have to gain from so much effort, especially since the Elixir of Daedalus does not seem to work in other timelines?

Barbarians at the Gates

The Roman Empire sits as the largest and most powerful government on the face of the Earth, and likely on Venus and Mars as well. Internally, the Empire is a tolerant and stabilizing force, intent on maintaining trade and peaceful relations amongst its various subjects. Outside the Empire, threats are beginning to loom. The Han Dynasty in China is at its peak, and is less than happy about a bunch of foreign barbarians (flying ships or not) intruding into its sphere of influence. A war between the two empires is not likely, though a loss of the eastern trade would greatly disrupt both parties (the Han more so than the Romans). The Satavahana Empire of southern India is another rival, and it challenges the Romans for control of the various petty kingdoms between their borders.

It is yet to be seen if the Romans and their Venusian auxiliaries can conquer the lands east of India. The terrain is very difficult, and though the Venusians are at home in the humidity and heat, they alone cannot complete the work of conquest. A stalemate in the jungle would be the first major defeat Rome has seen in nearly two centuries, and such a loss of confidence in the legions may encourage various ethnic groups to try and break away.

The cold and forested lands north of the Danube offer a different, but familiar, danger to the Empire. Penned in against the might of Rome, and pressed from the east by waves of nomadic tribes, the Germans and Dacians are beginning to boil with frustration. To date, the Empire has managed to cow the threat through intimidation and the ancient art of playing one foe against another. The famed Venusian auxiliaries would be of less use in this region as they are ill suited to year-round operations in cold climates.

GURPS Imperial Rome is an obvious choice for more information about the culture and society that is a basis for this setting. Perhaps less obvious is GURPS Martial Arts: Gladiators, for those campaigns that heavily feature action around the arena and can benefit from its weapons and templates.

A JOURNEY AROUND THE INNER PLANETS

The Roman Empire spans four planets and a moon, but only has significant control over Earth and Mars. Venus and the moon have only small outposts on them, and Mercury is claimed but not settled. The asteroid belt is slowly being explored, and expeditions are planned to make the long journey to Jupiter and its system of moons. No doubt a Flavian will be involved, at least if there is any profit in the venture.

Luna

The surface of the moon is a dry and empty wasteland covered with craters and dotted with entrances to caverns that fill its interior. The animals that inhabit the lunar caverns are bizarre and unlike those found on any other planet. Most famous of these are the moondragons – huge serpentine creatures covered with stumpy limbs as big around as a man's thigh. They live in the deepest caverns that also contain water, other strange beasts, and huge diamonds called lunar stars (the moon's sole source of wealth). Lunar stars are not true diamonds, and their formation is more like that of a pearl: Moondragons consume fist-sized rocks to act as gullet stones. Over the years, the moondragon's digestive juices produce a lustrous and semi-transparent stone that shows several layers of brightly colored strata. The earliest explorers collected stones they found excreted onto cavern floors, but now that their source is known, moondragon hunting is a lucrative – if dangerous – profession.

The Flavians

Through accident or design, members of the Flavian clan have been present at nearly every major off-world discovery. They have supplied explorers, tribunes, and colonial governors to the Empire, as well as merchants, sky-galley captains, and diplomats. A Flavian was the first on Mars and Venus, it was a Flavian who negotiated the trade goods for a warriors' deal with the Venusian chieftains, and it is a Flavian who governs the base at Luna Urbis. Naturally, it is a Flavian who sits on the throne in Rome.

Venus

At best, Venus is nearly 24,000,000 miles away from Earth, a three-month journey for most sky galleys. Although the closest planet to Earth, it was a planet that, at first, showed little promise. The first Roman expedition, led by Flavius Iulius Appius Venusia, found a world of thick jungles, broiling heat, and daily rainstorms. The native life was monstrous: giant insects, huge lizards, and great sea beasts. Of arable land for colonists, precious goods for trade, or even a dry piece of ground, they found nothing. There was one resource that

could be exploited, and luckily for both Rome and the Flavians, Appius managed to seize the opportunity.

The natives of Venus have a primitive low-technology (TL0) warrior culture based around personal loyalty and a strong sense of honor similar to the Roman virtues of disciplina (discipline), firmitas (tenacity), pieta (dutifulness), severitas (stereness), and virtua (manliness). By playing on these virtues and offering copious amounts of trade goods (metal, ceramics, and wine), Appius managed to negotiate an agreement with the local chieftains, allowing several Venusian warriors to switch allegiance to him and his family. These he brought back to Rome and made a fair return on his investment by selling them as bodyguards.

Bodyguards were one thing, but to make the establishment of an outpost on Venus worthwhile, the Empire needed a better use of the resources. In stepped yet another Flavian, Flavius Corvus Tiberius. His plan was to gather as many Venusian warriors as possible and sell them to the Emperor as auxiliaries for the legions. Today, the Flavian outposts scattered across the surface of Venus are busy handing out iron weapons to any chieftain who brings in warriors. This has created a system where Roman-backed tribes conquer poorly armed neighbors, exchange any prisoners taken for more Roman weaponry and wine, and repeat the cycle. Venus is now a planet continually at war, and the source of the Empire's most feared soldiers.

Venusians are a race of large reptilian humanoids, resembling eight-foot tall bipedal crocodiles. The males are massively built, and their scaly hide is as tough as boiled leather, and thickest along their backs and down their tails. Scale color is based on tribe, and thus there is a great diversity, ranging from light greens to dark browns, with the occasional "gem-flecked" individual possessing shiny spots of red, blue, and white. In general, coloration is darker on the back and lighter on the belly, and most Venusians have some form of stripping or stippling along their flanks. Although very impressive, Venusians' jaws and teeth are not any stronger than one would expect from a creature so large. Their dentition is that of a scavenger and part-time carnivore, and is thus large, sharp, and well designed for breaking bone.

Venusian senses are roughly equivalent to those of a human, though their sense of smell is more acute. Bright lights (an uncommon thing on pre-contact Venus) can be painfully distracting to Venusians who are unused to human illumination preferences. Likewise, they see better in poor light than most humans, and their perception of color is just as wide as any human.

It is unknown if Venusians from the unexplored parts of the world are any different culturally than the ones the Flavians have contacted, but it is generally assumed by scholars in Rome that all Venusians are uncivilized, if somewhat noble, barbarians. They are a warrior culture that places a great value on honor and loyalty. The chieftains, all male, rule the various bands as absolute monarchs. Each band is united by blood, and is almost always comprised of the chieftain (with his wives and his children) plus several subordinate warriors who have sworn undying loyalty to their chieftain and each other.

If the heroes aren't familiar with the oddities of Roma Universalis, they may well believe it's a standard Roman alternate Earth – until they start encountering flying ships and reptilian warriors. Particularly tricky GMs might even have heroes who end up here inadvertently have a "normal" Roman adventure before springing the weirdness on them.

Several bands come together to form a tribe – again, united by blood and oaths sworn between chieftains. No single chieftain rules a tribe, but instead, the various chieftains meet in council to decide issues that affect the tribe as a whole. Decisions are reached through debate and ritual combat between the chieftains (the concept of a personal champion is unheard of).

VENUSIAN WARRIOR

32 points

This racial template assumes a Venusian recently taken off his home world. A free Venusian would lose the Social Stigma and Status disadvantages. All Venusian warriors must have a Patron and a Duty of some sort, and most have multiple Senses of Duty: to their squad mates, patrons, officers, and even the Emperor himself.

Attribute Modifiers: ST+3 [30]; IQ-1 [-20]; HT+2 [20].

Advantages: Acute Taste and Smell 4 [8]; Amphibious [10]; Combat Reflexes [15]; Damage Resistance 2 (Tough Skin, -40%) [6]; Damage Resistance 4 (Directional, Back, -40%; Partial, Torso and Tail, -5%; Tough Skin, -40%) [4]; Discriminatory Smell [15]; Nictitating Membrane 1 [1]; Night Vision 3 [3].

Disadvantages: Code of Honor (Soldier's) [-10]; Cold-Blooded (65°F) [-10]; Innumerate [-5]; Low TL 3 [-15]; Social Stigma (Valuable Property) [-10]; Status -2 (Nonhuman) [-10].

Features: Lisp; Tail.

Mars

The crown jewel in the Rome's extraplanetary empire, Mars has proven to be bountiful in natural resources, trade, and opportunities for colonization. The native Martians are a tall and slender race whose appearance is anything if not inhuman. They have six limbs, all of which double as arms or legs, a roundish body, elephant-like ears, and a melon-shaped head. They lack a human- (or even Venusian-) shaped mouth, and instead have a long proboscis that they use to consume water and vat-grown liquid nutrients. Martians communicate through a mixture of high-pitched squeaks and pheromones. Luckily for Martian-human relations, Martians seem to have a

knack for the written word and are able to communicate through a pidgin of Martian and Latin writing.

Mars itself has been heavily conquered and settled by Rome. The natives are devout pacifists and have yet to lift a finger in their own defense. When their interests conflict with Roman interests, the Martians just sit there in passive defiance until either moved or slain. The natives are more than helpful in offering up goods for trade, and they seem to have an endless stock of gold, native silk, and advanced technologies (special-purpose grown biological items are very popular).

Mercury

Although Roman explorers have visited Mercury, the distance from Earth and the lack of any interesting resources has dissuaded further interest. The planet is much like the moon, only hotter and drier, and seems to lack the moon's interesting sublunarian ecosystem. No future trips to Mercury are planned, and even the Flavians have given up on this hot ball of rock.

*I wouldn't take Britain
if I were you. There's
nothing of value there,
and the people make
terrible slaves.*

*– I, Claudius
(1976)*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ken Spencer is a freelance writer and stay-at-home dad. He greatly enjoys writing for *Pyramid*, as well as for Chaosium and Alephhtar Games. Somehow, he also finds time for a monthly column, "A Bit of History," on rpg.net. Ken lives near the Wabash River in southern Indiana, with his wife, their son, her dog, his cat, and everybody's fish.

Martian Technology

The Martians have a biologically based technological culture and grow or raise all their "tools." They are TL5 except with regards to genetics, in which they have TL6 theory but only TL5 practical application. Martian items take two broad forms: living creatures that perform a service and items extracted from a creature. For example, a Martian house may be either a living organism that the Martians reside in, or the shell of a creature that produces houses through molting.

To date, the Martians have contributed greatly to Roman technology. The germ theory of disease and modern sanitation, printing press, telescope, microscope, and several exotic medical treatments have become popular among the elite and wealthy. These advancements have yet to spread to the lower classes, save on Mars itself, where these technologies are readily available to the Roman colonists.

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THE RED ROCKETS' GLARE

BY J. EDWARD TREMLETT

Red Moon, July 20, 1969: *The world watches as the first Americans on the moon prepare to meet the fourth group of cosmonauts to walk its surface.*

The Soviets had beaten America to the lunar surface one year before, to much fanfare. They had kept up a continuous launch schedule since then, in order to lay more scientific instruments down and further cement their dominance. Parades were held through Moscow, fiery rhetoric spoken at the UN, and endless propaganda produced from the Soviets' "scientific conquest" of the moon.

But now the emissaries of the two superpowers will be encountering one another on its surface. Attempts to guarantee the astronauts' safety has been met with diplomatic mockery, just as America has mocked the USSR's "claim" upon the whole of the moon. Rumors of armed cosmonauts and spacecraft-destroying satellites have been playing in the American press for months, and many are certain this will be the start of a third world war.

2:51 UTC: Neil Armstrong descends slowly from the LEM. He recites his prepared speech, but knowing he's only making a "small step for an American man," it feels self-important. He delivers it perfectly, but begrudgingly.

Then Buzz Aldrin is with him, and they walk toward a pair of waiting cosmonauts, standing a little too close for comfort. As the astronauts come closer, they see the Russians bear what may be either tokens of goodwill, or oddly-shaped weapons. Back home, hands are close to red telephones and dangerous buttons. A breath is held across the world.

A new age for Mankind, or a final world war – it begins now.

Throughout the 1960s on Homeline, the U.S. and the USSR were locked in a "space race" with one another. Fearing the consequences of a Soviet victory, NASA threw everything they could at the fulfillment of President Kennedy's dream to put a man on the moon by the end of the decade and bring him back safely to Earth. The Soviets initially seemed to be making great strides toward meeting or beating this goal – racking up several "firsts" in the process – but a successful moonshot ultimately eluded them.

The true reason why Homeline's Soviets "blinked" on lunar exploration is a long and tragic story that has only recently been revealed. Competing groups of designers, conflicting agendas, stifling military oversight, economic issues, and pure bad luck turned what could have been a long and grand adventure into a relative flash in the pan.

But what would have happened if the fates had been kinder?

Among the many divergent timelines observed by the Infinity Patrol, there exists an Earth where the Soviet Union got ahead of America. In the world known as Red Moon, the Soviets were able to build a rival to the Saturn-5 rocket and used it to leapfrog past Apollo – going from Earth to the moon a year before America.

It is a world where the free nations of the world dread looking up at night for fear of seeing a lost, red moon staring down, and around it Soviet space. It is a world where superspies clash quietly in the night and rival astronauts warily eye each others' spacecraft and bases. Military platforms orbit the Earth, preparations for space warfare are underway, and the world no longer sees space as the final frontier but as the final battleground.

Space – the final battleground.

This article provides the divergent history of the Red Moon timeline, looking at the Soviets' altered achievements throughout the 1960s and 1970s, and suggests the lines of battle that may be drawn because of them. It also offers options for what could happen in the 1980s, a look at the native agencies who are steering this world's course, and information on what the big players of *GURPS Infinite Worlds* are doing. It is designed to be used for *Infinite Worlds*, but could also make the basis of an alternate-history campaign.

A trip to the moon (or back) generally takes about three days with TL7-8 technology.

Red Moon, 1980

Current Affairs

A successful Soviet space program has led to a more vigorous “space race” between the U.S. and USSR.

Divergence Point

1953; Trofim Lysenko is removed as the head Soviet biologist.

Major Civilizations

Chinese (empire), Orthodox (empire with satellite states), Western (multipolar).

Great Powers

United States (representative democracy, CR3), Soviet Union (dictatorship, CR6), People’s Republic of China (dictatorship, CR6), British Commonwealth (representative democracies, CR2-4).

Worldline Data

TL: 7

Mana Level: No mana

Quantum: 5

Infinity Class: R5

Centrum Zone: Orange

A RED HOUSE OVER YONDER

In 1957, the Soviets were well ahead of America in terms of their space program, at least in terms of overt achievements. Working under fast and seemingly superior conditions, they gave the world the first artificial satellite; the first animal in orbit; the first probes to strike the moon, Mars, and Venus; the first man in orbit, the first woman in orbit; and the first EVA. As far as the world knew, there was yet more Red space adventurism on the horizon – each achievement’s true shape hidden until news of yet another first sounded the world over.

What America didn’t know was that the USSR’s rapid-fire space advancements were created in an obscenely lucky moment, when the desire to possess an ICBM brought certain driving forces together for a brief period of time. The momentum of that achievement allowed for such a cavalcade of firsts in the “space race,” but once the forward motion died down, those forces went back to working at cross purposes. Doubtless they would have continued to do so for the next two decades had certain decisions not been made.

Behind the Iron Curtain, there were competing and uncooperative agendas at work, which made for an atmosphere that stifled success more often than it produced it. However, after American President John F. Kennedy threw down the lunar gauntlet in May of 1961, Sergey Korolyov – the mysterious

“chief designer” of the Soviet space program – began to blueprint a moonshot of his own, and decided to not stand for the nonsense he had worked with up to that point. So, in 1962, he took his plans directly to Khrushchev himself and, all but barricading himself in his leader’s office, explained how the USSR was going to fail in the quest for space.

Korolyov pointed out that there were numerous problems with the way the program was being handled. He was sick of butting heads with colleagues turned competitors, scrambling for resources like famine victims fighting over table scraps, and being made to produce results for propaganda purposes, rather than in their own time. If the program was to work, it would require top-down management and all hands working on one product.

Chief among his concerns was that if the Soviet Union wanted to beat the Americans to the moon, then they would need a better rocket. He *had* the plans for such a rocket – the N1 – but it was going to require less competition and more money if they intended to make it work by the target date of 1965. He wasn’t going to willingly leave Khrushchev’s office until he had a guarantee of both.

Khrushchev must have been in a good mood that day; instead of sacking Korolyov for having the temerity to speak to him in that way, he praised his attitude, promised to change things, and sent him back to work. The following week, a series of orders

were put into place, essentially confirming that everything Korolyov wanted was now official state policy, most notably the unquestioning obedience of his fellow engineers. A few people grumbled, but an official, state visit from Khrushchev – and a quiet meeting with him and the loudest complainer – mostly put an end to that.

In that charged atmosphere, Soviet aeronautics went forward quickly. The N1 rocket went through several swift design changes, and soon was able to carry a 100-ton payload, meaning that the lunar vehicle complex could be launched in one go, rather than having to be assembled in space. The first few launch attempts ended in failure – perhaps due to remaining pockets of resistance on Korolyov’s competitors’ part – but when the bird flew, in 1965, it flew beautifully. That success allowed Khrushchev to give a green light to funding the completion of the lunar vehicle complex, and then testing it in orbit.

Sadly, Korolyov would not live to see his triumph take shape, dying of surgical complications in 1966. But in that same year, the problem-plagued Soviet lunar probe program finally achieved a soft landing, which gave Korolyov’s successor, Vasili Mishin, all the data needed to start serious preparations for a moonshot. Mishin would have to work quickly, though, as he was directly tasked by Khrushchev – no longer avoiding “propaganda launches” – to have a working spacecraft by 1967, for the 50th anniversary of the Great October Revolution.

He then wanted it followed up by a moon landing by 1968, hopefully well in advance of the Americans.

On an alternate Red Moon Prime (see p. 20), it’s possible that there’s something Man Was Not Meant to Know on the moon – in which case “winning” the space race might make them the ultimate losers.

Divergence Points

The Infinity Patrol has identified the two major events that have caused Red Moon's deviation from Homeline. Both start out small, but mushroom into larger patterns, ultimately changing the two superpowers' race to the moon.

The first takes place in Russia, in 1953, when a meeting between the newly installed Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev, and Stalin's chief biologist, Trofim Lysenko, goes a little awry. Maybe Khrushchev doesn't like the man's attempt at a joke, considering it to be an affront to his humble beginnings, and maybe he doesn't think the man's science adds up. Whichever it is, Lysenko is out of his position within a year, and his views on environmentally acquired inheritance in plants, once official, are now openly critiqued and ridiculed. Soviet agriculture is allowed to progress along more scientifically prudent lines, resulting in record crop yields, so that the Soviet Union can

afford to export grain. This brings in revenue that later allows Khrushchev to funnel much-needed money to the Soviet space program.

The second takes place in America, almost a full decade later. It's March of 1963, and someone of high importance in a dastardly plot dies in a horrible car crash in New Orleans. The information he has in his head dies with him, and, as a result, key pieces of that plot are not connected. People don't talk to one another, supplies are not ferried to where they need to go, cover stories and alibis are not provided, and their long-suffering patsy is not fully activated.

Bowed under the weight of poor planning, the assassination of President Kennedy does not happen. He wins a second term in office, but the embarrassments and scandals of the first make even his good ideas – especially the race to the moon – seem somewhat questionable.

AND THE RED QUEEN'S OFF WITH HER HEAD

Across the oceans the atmosphere was just as charged, but only NASA was really feeling the electricity.

By 1966, the forward momentum of America's side of the Space Race was ebbing. John F. Kennedy's second term in office had become plagued by scandals, almost from inauguration day, and America's space program was getting a drubbing in the press, with some people saying they weren't doing enough and others saying they were doing too much. Congress was asking questions that the scientists and engineers couldn't answer to their satisfaction, and President Kennedy – too busy answering questions about Vietnam and Marilyn Monroe – didn't have a lot of time to stump for space anymore.

Then disaster struck. In January of 1967, three Astronauts died in a fire during a preflight check for the first manned Apollo launch. The sense of loss was quickly replaced by anger and the laying of blame, and after Congress saw enough heads roll to continue full funding "in good conscience," NASA took 10 months to redesign and retest the Apollo spacecraft. They had to be certain that there would be no further fatalities in the program, even if it meant losing precious time to the Soviets. They knew Baikonur had a rocket like the Saturn-5, but had no idea that they had lunar vehicles under construction and almost ready to be fitted for a test fire.

NASA wouldn't be in the dark for long. That July, the Soviets launched the LOK/LK complex on an unmanned test flight, following it up with the three-man, Soyuz 3 flight three months later, in October – just in time for the anniversary. A month after that, while NASA was launching the unmanned Apollo 4 to test the redesigned spacecraft, the Soviets were doing manned test separations in Earth orbit. By December they'd launched two craft into orbit around the moon, and were making preparations to land on its surface.

They might have landed sooner, except that there was trouble at home. After a number of tumultuous years in charge – some said four too many – Khrushchev was deposed in a quiet coup in January of 1968. Leonid Brezhnev was now head of the USSR, and he slowly began to sweep aside some of the reforms that his now-disgraced predecessor had brought into being. Chief among the changes would be his relationship with the Soviet Space Program: Where Khrushchev had been "hands-off," provided they didn't displease him, Brezhnev wanted to control everything – even to the point of demanding the "propaganda launches" the late Sergey Korolyov had so bitterly despised.

Thus began a frustrating period of "hurry up and wait," during which Brezhnev alternated between castigating Mishin for doing too much, then too little. NASA, not understanding why the Soviets weren't going forward with the moon program, jumped ahead on Apollo, hoping to yet overtake their Communist rivals. However, by the time they launched the unmanned Apollo 6 mission in early April, they learned that the Soviets were preparing for the moonshot.

On May 1, 1968, Soyuz 7 landed on the moon. Cosmonaut Alexei Leonov exited the small, single-person LK lander, and stepped into history. The streets of the Soviet Union erupted as the people marched and cheered in patriotic joy. Brezhnev addressed his empire and praised the Space Program for the "scientific conquest" of Earth's natural satellite: "For now and for always, let the people know that a Red Moon watches over this planet. It will soon be joined by Red Space, a Red Mars, and, before much longer, a Red Earth."

Embarrassed but not chastened by defeat, NASA continued the Apollo program as scheduled, not wanting to sacrifice safety just to get to the moon sooner. As far as they – and Congress – were concerned, the Space Race was not officially over. Even if the Soviets had won the moon, there were still other frontiers to beat them to, and ways to keep them from achieving total dominion over what they'd already taken.

If the moon harbored something dark, this world may have its own Black Chamber (see Pyramid #3/5: Horror & Spies).

Senator Richard M. Nixon fully agreed, and turned the need for “the strategic deterrent of Communism on Earth and in Space” into a successful campaign slogan. Bolstered by the news that the Soviets had just developed a new lunar lander, capable of putting up to three cosmonauts on the moon, he easily beat a Kennedy-tarnished Lyndon B. Johnson in the 1968 elections. In 1969, he had his new ambassador to the United Nations call for the world to use space as a shared asset, rather than something for a single nation or ideology to control. The Nixon administration committed itself to defend the “final frontier” against such domination, hopefully with the backing of the free world, but – if necessary – alone.

So when Apollo 11 landed on the moon, in July of 1969, it was with the full understanding that the United States would consider any attack on it to be an act of war, and react accordingly.

THEY LIVED IN AN ALLEY UNDER THE RED SKY

Homeline has mapped out the natural progression of events for this timeline (see p. 20). Homeline has deployed the Infinity Patrol to observe and ensure there is no outside interference this timeline’s development.

Earth

Interestingly enough, most terrestrial world events that took place on Homeline between 1970 and 1980 are mirrored on Red Moon, plus or minus 1.5 years. The chief differences are in the rapid advancement of America and the USSR’s space programs, and the uninterrupted conservative control of America’s presidency right up until the end of the Cold War.

America still stays in Vietnam until the early 1970s, international terrorism still becomes a stubborn problem, and the Islamic Revolution still takes place in Iran on schedule. The resulting American hostage crisis is ended within a week when newly installed President Alexander Haig sends in a military raid to rescue them, creating a “hostage excuse” that future presidents might use to justify several anti-communist “police actions.”

In America, fear replaces hope. Newspapers and news broadcasts present everything the Soviets do in space as a direct threat to America, and castigate NASA, Congress, and the president for not doing more. A popular slogan at the time is “Bomb the moon,” and pictures of a cartoon moon shot full of holes are everywhere. The counterculture playfully retaliates by making “Share Space” pins and signs, but their primary focus is on the war in Vietnam.

Politically, the anti-communists have a field day, especially under presidents Nixon and Agnew. Heads roll at various levels of the government – especially NASA – and the political landscape shifts further to the right. Leftist and “pro-communist” groups are targeted by federal law enforcement, and

suffer surveillance, harassment, and various “dirty tricks.” Women’s liberation, gay liberation, and “black power” movements are tarred with the same anti-communist brush, and castigated for being “disloyal” and “un-American.” President Agnew’s resignation in 1978 acts to tone these attacks down, but his replacement, Alexander Haig, is not much kinder to America’s changing social culture.

In the USSR, Brezhnev rules for the entire decade. He rolls back Khrushchev’s anti-Stalinist reforms, but heightens state censorship. The KGB seems to be everywhere, and while dissidents still find ways to meet and get their message out to others, the shadow of Siberia grows long and sharp once again.

He also employed the so-called Brezhnev Doctrine, which says that the Soviet Union can interfere with any socialist country that is acting “incorrect.” He used this as a pretext to send tanks into Czechoslovakia in 1968, and other satellite nations are all too aware that they could be next. Relations with China go from bad to worse, the Vietcong is supplied to help fight America, and the Soviet Union invades Afghanistan in 1979.

Known Space

The 1969 American-Soviet meeting on the lunar surface is peaceful, and both countries’ fears of immanent war end when the explorers shake hands. Of course, that doesn’t stop the Soviet government from insisting that the moon is theirs, and that they are only “allowing” the Americans to visit. However, they don’t openly object to the next nine scheduled Apollo missions. They even offer to aid Apollo 13.

The problem comes in 1973, when Skylab is launched, and the American government unveils both the Apollo Extension Program and plans for a reusable “space shuttle.” The Extension Program, which is designed to put astronauts on the moon for months at a time, is seen as a spying maneuver by the Soviets, and they claim that Skylab is a weapons platform. As for the shuttle, they seemingly have no opinion, though intelligence suggests they plan to make their own.

There are some tense moments, but the unmanned Apollo 21 – carrying extended living compartments – launches on schedule in January of 1974, followed in March by the three-man Apollo 22. The crew finishes assembling the base, and stays on the moon for 202 days, exploring the surface, searching for water, and performing various experiments. The rotating groups of cosmonauts keep a respectful distance, and though it’s clear they’re building something, the astronauts never quite see what.

They are replaced by Apollo 23’s crew in October, and then Apollo 24 in May of 1975. After they leave, the Soviets reveal that they have completed the framework for a permanent lunar colony, which will be called *Mir* (“Peace”). To mark the momentous occasion, the crew of Soyuz 27 unfurls a massive red star that is firmly visible from Earth. A shaken President Nixon shortly delivers his famous “Base Alpha” speech, proposing an American colony on the moon, both for science and “the defense of the free world,” by the decade’s end.

Homeline collectors of space memorabilia would love to possess any of the strange and unusual artifacts this world’s history makes possible. Regardless of whether the collectors are interested in the U.S. or USSR space program, acquiring artifacts of either runs the real risk of running afoul of this world’s most powerful governments . . .

Meanwhile, Skylab hosts six different groups of Astronauts – including members of what will soon become the European Space Agency (ESA) – until it is decommissioned after Apollo 24 ends. Its replacement, Spacelab, is launched in time for the American Bicentennial, and built up over the next several years to become 10 times as large as Skylab. Once it's announced that Spacelab *will* carry armaments, the Soviets furiously claim that America is trying to “weaponize” space.

The Soviets begin launching lunar colonists in late 1975, starting with Soyuz 28. By the end of 1976, 10 Soviet men and women have lived on the moon for an entire year, building *Mir* from the inside out and perfecting various waste-reclamation and hydroponic techniques to survive. Automated lunar landers – sent from a battery of small, *Salyut* (“salute”) space stations – bring a steady stream of components and supplies, along with anti-spacecraft armaments “for defense of Soviet territory.”

In the wake of *Mir*, some of NASA's plans are changed. The remaining fleet of Saturn-5 is taken from Apollo and put to work rotating Spacelab's crew and supplying it with construction materials. The Apollo program is discontinued, and a new program, called Athena, is created for American activities on the moon. Chief among the plans is the construction of Base Alpha, slated to be operational by 1979.

For America, the key is the Space Shuttle. When it launches in 1978, the fleet begins sending a constant rotation of crew, space-station components, and Athena parts into orbit. Spacelab's crew and facilities grow exponentially – especially its external assembly pads, from which all future moonshots are built and launched.

Athena 1 – a single-stage spacecraft designed to land four Astronauts and a substantial payload on the moon – leaves Spacelab in late 1978. On its maiden voyage, it makes a pointed flyover of *Mir* on the way down. Just as they were almost a decade before, hands are on buttons and red telephones the world over, but the Soviets do not shoot.

Brezhnev calls President Haig and congratulates him on a successful return to the moon, though he can't help but mention that there will be 50 cosmonauts living at *Mir* by the end of the decade. While Athenas 1, 2, and 3 do most of the work to get Base Alpha up and running by that time, they do so knowing that the Soviets are still in firm control of the moon and will be for some time.

Unknown Space

Throughout the decade, America's covert space maneuvers are done through a second program, codenamed Ares. These activities include launching spy satellites, jamming transmitters, and arming anti-spacecraft weapons – such as the later-infamous orbital mine. There are also plans for orbital nuclear devices to be used both in space and over Soviet territory, but these will not be deployed unless it is discovered that the Soviets have a nuclear space weapon pointed at Earth.

Ares projects are launched in “commercial rockets” or as “space probes.” By 1980, it is estimated that one in five “satellite” launches are actually disguised Ares objects or have Ares components. They are occasionally sent up with Apollo events

and quietly deployed without the astronauts knowing what went up with them.

Starting with Apollo 13, all spaceflights clandestinely carry small ship-to-ship missiles in the service module. A catastrophic malfunction in the missile lock lead to a near-catastrophe on that first flight, and appropriate design changes were made. Lunar landers are never armed, nor are command modules, and Apollo astronauts carried no ballistic weapons on their person. The Athena craft and Space Shuttles carry obvious ship-to-ship missiles and cannons, and their astronauts carry collapsible, single-shot “bangsticks” (much like what divers use on sharks) for hand-to-hand combat.

There is no longer any doubt about the strength and skill of American science, American industry, American education, and the American free enterprise system. In short, our national space effort represents a great gain in, and a great resource of, our national strength . . .

*– President John F. Kennedy,
November 23, 1963*

The Soviet Union has no need to create a new space organization for “secret” work, given how often it hides things. For example, it is often said that Yuri Gagarin was not the first man in space – simply the first man to survive. The Soviets frequently send up things that no one knows about, and either give these things an innocuous appellation (*Cosmos* is a favorite) or deny them. Their *Zenit* spy satellites were flying since the mid-60s, and are joined by killer satellites and orbital missiles during the 1970s, along with orbital nuclear weapons as early as 1978.

All *Soyuz* flights are armed, both in the LOK and LK sections, just in case someone should attack cosmonauts on the moon. The Soviets experiment with several models of hand-held ballistic weapons throughout the decade, but never develop a satisfactory prototype, and have to fall back on long knives. They *do* carry a firearm on board every mission, but it's in the orbiter's survival kit for returning to Earth and not readily accessible.

While the Soviets chide America for using Skylab as a weapons platform, they already have their own. First launched in 1974, the *Almaz* (“Diamond”) series of space stations are small military outposts equipped with a rapid-fire cannon emplacement. The firing is complicated by noise and vibrations, which makes their use in a space battle unpredictable at best.

Depending on the focus of the campaign, the GURPS Spaceships line can be very useful to design and develop craft for this alternate world.

Eight Miles High

The USSR and U.S. managed to avoid World War III between 1969 and 1980, and the Cold War crystallized. Both superpowers go about their business, unwilling to provoke the other into outright war. By Infinity's best guess, this could continue until the Soviet Union's collapse leads to a new age of cooperation, on Earth and in space. If it happens in 1991 (as on *Homeline*), then humanity goes out into the stars: massive orbital habitations by 2010, Mars colonies by 2030, and manned ships to Alpha Centauri by the dawn of the 22nd century.

What could go wrong? Plenty. While *Homeline* has calculated the most likely path between the years (*Red Moon Prime*, below), there are other possibilities. Some of these may be accidents or a result of some cross-dimensional scheming. Any of them could be the foundation for a campaign in their own right. None of these are extant parallel worlds to *Red Moon*, but they *could* be.

Red Moon Prime starts with what could easily be a pretext for war, when, in the early 1980s, President Reagan learns that *Mir* has at least one nuclear weapon aimed at the Earth. He immediately goes public with this knowledge and demands the Soviets take it offline. They refuse, which leads the U.S. to put one at Base Alpha and place nuclear devices in orbit over Soviet territories. This rush on both sides to close the "spacewar gap" causes no end of worry and leads to an uneasy détente, during which the USSR stagnates culturally and economically. Premier Gorbachev introduces reforms, but it's too late, and the Soviet Union collapses in 1991, leading to a brighter future for Earth (see above).

There is also the *Red Moon Rising* scenario, where *perestroika* comes early enough to save the Soviet Union. Their switch to a guided market economy causes them to

become an economic powerhouse, and they begin to completely outclass America in space exploitation and exploration. A massive economic disaster in the early 21st century "proves" the false promises of unchecked capitalism, and much of the free world adopts their style of economy to survive, or apply to become satellite states. America alone holds out, and collapses in 2076 – becoming a motley, war-torn collection of independent states. Meanwhile, the long-prophesied Red Planet explores its solar system without the help of what once was the U.S.

An even more pessimistic possibility is *Red Moon Defeated*, where America and the USSR go to war over the issue of nuclear weapons on the moon, and the Soviet Union loses. World War III does not go nuclear, thankfully, but every non-nuclear trick both superpowers – and their allies – have is used to shred each others' armies and, sadly, their space programs. The USSR sues for peace after three years, and the victorious U.S. and her allies gleefully take over the Soviet Union and its wrecked space capabilities. Bereft of a rival, America lets its space programs falter, and humanity goes no further than the moon for a full century.

Finally, there is *Red Moon Lost*, in which World War III goes nuclear, and Mutually Assured Destruction takes place. The only survivors of the atomic holocaust are in orbit, both in space stations and on the moon. These last vestiges of humanity quickly realize that to survive, they will need to lay aside their differences and cooperate. Perhaps their children might be lucky enough to return to Earth, someday, and rebuild the planet their parents let burn. For now, there are only the cold facts of survival, dwindling resources, and the knowledge that they may be the last generation of humanity.

Outer Space

Throughout the 1970s, both America and the USSR are keenly interested in what lies beyond Earth's orbit. The United States launches probes to the inner and outer planets throughout the decade and anxiously awaits the information they send back. The data from the Mars-bound Viking program is of extreme interest to NASA, as they intend to launch a mission there sometime in the 1980s, hoping to keep the Soviets from turning it into a real "Red planet." The mission entails building a larger version of the current Athena spacecraft, with a separate lander module, and is tentatively scheduled for 1986.

Meanwhile, the Soviets have also been busy with probes, but have focused on exploring Venus, the moon, and Mars, and – most importantly – getting there first. Information from their Mars program, which has suffered numerous setbacks, is being used to create one of the late Sergey Korolyov's dreams: the TMK spacecraft, to be used to take cosmonauts to Mars. The current plan is to send the first ship out to orbit the fourth planet in 1982, and then send men down to the surface on the second mission, in 1984. The two missions may be combined

into one larger "Mars or bust" operation if they think the Americans are getting close to beating them.

THE HOME TEAMS

The three main aerospace players native to the *Red Moon* timeline are the Americans, the Soviets, and the British. The British are allied with the Americans, though they are being somewhat cagey with the means by which they're helping out. An organization called the European Space Agency comes together halfway through the decade, but their role is more complementary than primary.

The Americans' space program is overseen by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), headquartered in Washington, D.C., with operational bases at Marshall Space Flight Center in Alabama, and the Launch Operations Center on Merritt Island, Florida. The Air Force handles its security, which has gone from tight to absolute; scientists, technicians, astronauts, and their families are now living in lockdown conditions on-site in Alabama and Florida.

*In particular, see **Spaceships 5: Exploration and Colony Craft** for the Nova-class rocket ships and its campaign advice.*

America's primary intelligence agency in the fight for a Soviet-free sky is Air Force Intelligence. Headquartered at the Pentagon, the AFI's four branches handle NORAD, satellite intelligence, electronic warfare and analysis, the examination of captured enemy aircraft, and worldwide monitoring of nuclear weapons and materials. Unlike the Central Intelligence Agency – their chief rivals for this kind of work – they tend to work through their own devices, rather than relying on secret agents and turned Soviets. This means the AFI observes more than it acts, and often delivers actionable intelligence to the CIA to “handle.”

The Soviets' space program is overseen by the Soviet government, and is headquartered at the Cosmodrome in Tyuratam, Kazakhstan. In keeping with the absolute security, the Cosmodrome is named Baikonur, after a nearby village, but the real action is going on in Tyuratam. Security for the nine launch complexes would normally be handled by the KGB's Fifteenth Directorate, but after 1969, this is done by the Red Stars – an elite, Spetsnaz-trained corps legendary for its tenacity and ruthlessness. Double agents and saboteurs take their own lives rather than risk falling into their hands.

Soviet counterintelligence is handled by the KGB, who directly oversees the Red Stars and performs all high-profile interrogations with a distinct lack of humor. They report directly to the Supreme Soviet, which has even less of a sense of humor, especially when it comes to failure, incompetence, and inter-bureau rivalries.

Starting in 1975, several European nations come together to form the European Space Administration. Headquartered in Paris, the ESA's first experiments are launched by NASA, but they start sending up their own Ariane-1 rockets from Guiana Space Centre in Kourou, French Guiana, in 1979. The Ariane-1 is capable of lifting two-ton payloads, which, for the ESA, are mostly satellites and space probes. They do not have a manned space program, nor do they plan to, and they try to stay out of the superpowers' way. However, they wind up being used by both of them, in turn.

The United Kingdom is a proud member of the ESA, and therefore do not have their own space program. What they *do* have is the premier space spying agency, which is a division of MI-6 called MAJOR. Their superspies – codenamed “Tommies” – have worked to turn and smuggle out key Soviet Scientists, sabotage new rockets and satellites, intercept or destroy spy satellites on their way down, and rescue or deny to the enemy lost American spy planes and satellites. This is one of the reasons why the Soviet space program is stymied with accidents and bad luck, and while some of these operations are done with a wink and a nod to the Americans, most of them are completely secret, even to the AFI and CIA.

Why? Apart from realpolitik concerns, the British do not want anyone to know about their greatest intelligence coup since World War II: a secret base in the Spice Islands, which MI-6 quietly wrested from a terrorist organization in the early 1960s. A nameless group of Eastern European lunatics were planning to launch nuclear weapons into orbit and rain them down on the world if their demands weren't met, but MI-6 found out about the plot and quietly put an end to it.

Since then, they've had both Island X and its surprisingly advanced science in their hands, and have used them both to stymie and stall the Soviet march to space supremacy. They've launched anti-satellite weapons at Soviet killer satellites, and are decoding the terrorist group's other, less savory inventions for use in the field – giving their superspies some interesting gadgets to work with, but not to share with the Americans just yet.

INFINITE CONCERNS

Three of the major crossworld agencies have an interest in the Red Moon timeline.

Homeline

The Infinity Patrol is monitoring this timeline closely, as they know that Centrum is very interested in it, though they aren't sure why. They also want to preserve what happens when the two superpowers work together.

They have identified the two primary, aforementioned points of divergence, and have mapped out several smaller deviations that could be used to bring this world closer to Homeline. The two primaries are receiving top priority, with several Infinity Patrol agents assigned to watch for attempts to interfere. Meanwhile, the smaller ones are being “handled” lightly – handing key pieces of information and misinformation over to native intelligence agencies to deal with. That way, corrective actions can be taken by natives of Red Moon, thus reducing the Infinity Patrol's need to directly interfere, which could create more temporal complications than necessary.

Centrum

The Infinity Patrol is correct that Centrum is very interested in Red Moon, but while their true goal is rather impressive, their means to that end are somewhat minimalist. They're planning to steal something from this timeline's Mars that does not exist on their own, and think that the Soviets' near-dominance of space is the most cost-effective and surreptitious way to get it. If they just reached out to take the object, the Infinity Patrol would likely stop them, but by playing a long game, they might yet succeed.

To pursue this gambit, Centrum has implanted several agents within both the Kremlin and Baikonur. The Kremlin agents have been tasked to prevent the USSR from making dumb errors: refocusing certain economic and military priorities, and bringing forward certain reforms while denying others. Their goal is to keep the Soviet Union together at least through 1990, by which time the Soviet TMK should have launched for Mars.

Meanwhile, the agents in the space program have three tasks to perform. The first is to use Red Moon-contemporary techniques and materials to subtly increase the Soviets' space war capabilities: better anti-ship weapons and satellites, and handheld ballistic weapons for use in low-G, vacuum environments. The second task is to lay the theoretical groundwork for the TMK program, and make certain the chosen landing zone is within range of the object.

Centrum informs us they are definitely not seeking the Nectar Box (Pyramid #3/12: Tech and Toys). Centrum requests you report to them any who mistakenly believe this, so Centrum may send agents to correct the misconceptions.

The third and most important task is to create a way the Martian object can be taken without the Infinity Patrol seeing it's being worked toward, and the Soviets realizing something's amiss. Certain mechanisms on the TMK's lander will be dual use, so that, when the object is found, the hijacked electronics will automatically transport it back to Centrum. The hijacking will most likely doom the cosmonauts, but Centrum does not really care.

Meanwhile, a battery of xenoarchaeologists will at long last have their hands on the mysterious object. What secrets this alien "box" holds is anyone's guess, but it's doubtful that Centrum will put it to kind use.

Friends! Before us is the moon. Let us all work together with the great goal of conquering the moon.

– Sergey Korolyov, after first EVA, March 21, 1965

Reich-5

The Nazis have landed in Red Moon but are playing this one very carefully, which is why neither the Infinity Patrol nor Centrum have spotted them just yet. Their intention is to engineer a fascist takeover of America in the late 20th century, once the Soviets have collapsed, and then use America's superior space war technologies to subdue the rest of the world in a Near Earth Orbit blitzkrieg. To that end, they have made clandestine contact with Red Moon's ODESSA, and used them to forge links with easily manipulated Soviet scientists and conservative American "kingmakers" they know share their goals.

The plan is to manipulate these native agents to bolster America's space war program. First they will visibly build up the Soviets' orbital arsenal to insane levels, which will cause America to panic and do everything needed to get ahead. When they've surpassed the Soviets, the Reich will slow the Russians down by denying them key advancements through sabotage and misdirection. Once America surges far enough past them, the Reich will cripple the Soviet program by creating horrible space accidents and then bogging the USSR down in costly debacles – like a war with China – to ensure it collapses on or before schedule.

The American kingmakers will then begin tying together the plots they will have been working on since the 1970s. The anti-Communist fervor of the last few decades will be turned to the Reich's needs, and America will slowly be transformed into a near police state. Finally, a bland and unassuming president will be elected in the 21st century, and once he engineers a reason to go to war with a de-toothed Russian Federation, a new Reich will be born under his watch.

ALTERNATE STORIES

The conflict between the Infinity Patrol and its cross-time enemies could create a number of Campaign possibilities, as Homeline's agents fight to keep the Red Moon from truly being lost or manipulated to fit someone else's twisted

agenda. But there are other possibilities as well – native campaigns where the *Infinite Worlds* agents are only seen in the background, if at all.

The Red Game: The PCs are a production team of Soviet scientists working at Baikonur. They didn't win out on the design for the N1 rocket for scientific or political reasons – maybe both – and were therefore relegated to making "minor" components for Soyuz launches, or working on other, long-term projects. However, some unseen stranger has just handed them something that could make their careers: partial plans for a working "moon rifle" that could fire bullets in zero-G vacuum. If they could make it work, they'd have a leg up on both their competing scientists and the Americans. But who gave it to them? Why are they getting threatening, anonymous notes telling them not to make it, and then different anonymous notes threatening them if they don't? They will have to exercise political savvy and a fine-tuned paranoia if they're to survive this "gift."

The Men from MAJOR: The PCs are secret agents for either America or the USSR, and they are working to destabilize their rival. Any accident, setback, mysterious death, or missing plans the enemy country suffers may well be their doing. However, they are noticing that there seems to be a third player in this: a shadowy organization with advanced technology that seems to be helping the Americans and hindering the Soviets. Further digging leads to dead ends – both figurative and literal – but over time, the investigators may learn of MAJOR, its Tommies, and the secret base on Island X. What happens then?

The Sea of Storms: It's been really quiet up on the moon lately. The heroes – American or Soviet – are busy building their respective bases, doing experiments, and watching the other side to see if they're up to anything suspicious. Sure enough, those sneaky people over there are creating something new and unrecognizable, and the folks at home have no idea what it could be. Orders are to observe and identify the object and, if it looks hostile, find a way to clandestinely sabotage it. Fortunately, it's the new moon, so it's dark enough to do some quiet reconnaissance. But if they get caught, it may mean a fight with the other side, and, quite possibly, World War III. What is the mystery device, and is it really worth all that trouble?

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

By day an unassuming bookstore clerk, J. Edward Tremlett takes his ancient keyboard from its hiding place and unfurls his words upon the world. His bizarre lifestyle has taken him to such exotic locales as South Korea and Dubai, UAE. He is a frequent contributor to *Pyramid*, has been the editor of *The Wraith Project*, and has seen print in *The End Is Nigh* and *Worlds of Cthulhu*. He's also part of the *Echoes of Terror* anthology. Currently, he writes for Op-Ed News, and lives in Lansing, Michigan, with his wife and three cats.

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CYBERME

BY MARK GELLIS

The *Infinite Worlds* Quantum 6 timeline now known as Cyberme (pronounced “cyber-may”) was first visited by an Infinity survey team slightly less than a year ago. (Officially, this timeline is Cyberme-1, although no other world quite like it has yet been discovered.)

At first glance, Cyberme appears to be a fairly typical timeline where history has gone much as it has in Homeline. The local year is 2017. There is no clear point of divergence, but a cluster of minor ones has left its mark on society. (One of the most visible points of divergence is that Japan is a true superpower, economically at least, with a robust economy that is three times as large as it is on Homeline.) Over the last 100 years on Cyberme, there has been a general trend by governments around the world to favor large corporations. In almost every area, regulations have been scaled back and companies have been given much freer rein to conduct business however they want to do so. What matters is profit, jobs, and the prosperity these things bring.

The nations of Cyberme are not corporate states. However, governments remain responsible for passing and enforcing laws, protecting borders with military forces, and other geopolitical tasks, but large corporations have enormous influence, and many public services (including police in some cities) have been privatized.

Other differences have surfaced. In a few areas, science and industry have surged ahead of Homeline, and a variety of peculiar technologies are in development. In fact, Cyberme feels very much like an exaggerated version of Japan as it appears in some science-fiction novels and anime series. This led the leader of the initial survey team (a self-admitted “otaku” in his youth) to coin the portmanteau word “cyberme,” which is a combination of “anime” and “cyberpunk.”

THE CULTURE OF CYBERME

Mainstream culture throughout the industrialized world is very work-oriented. Employment environments around the world resemble those in Japan. Men and women work long hours not only to achieve results but to make sure they are seen by their superiors as valuable and dedicated employees. (Many teenagers and even pre-teens on Cyberme are expected to help take care of housework and to watch younger siblings; their parents are sometimes not home until long after dinner, or away on business trips that keep them from home for weeks at a time.) Socializing with co-workers after work as a team-building exercise is very common. Those who reach the managerial ranks in

a government agency or a large corporation, along with professionals like doctors and engineers, are likely to enjoy middle-class or upper-class status. Indeed, about the only way to reach the upper classes if one has not been born into a wealthy family is by attaining executive rank in some large corporation.

Those who are not part of the great hives of corporate or government power often struggle. Professionals like scientists, engineers, and managers do well, but the salaries for factory workers and junior administrative assistants are usually low. It is also easy for big corporations, criminals, or corrupt local politicians to squeeze small-business owners. Places housing corporate executives or government officials receive the best services, sometimes at the expense of other neighborhoods. Cities often reveal stark divisions between the gleaming skyscrapers of the financial districts, the park-like private estates of the wealthy, the neatly designed apartment complexes of the professional classes, and the shabby, run-down neighborhoods where everyone else lives.

If you cannot compete, then you will not get far in this life.

Not surprisingly, competition even before work is fierce. The children of the wealthiest families have an edge, as they always do, but the corporations are far too greedy to let anything like breeding get in the way of profit. Genuine talent, once noticed, will be carefully cultivated no matter where it comes from. But there is a price. Children try to get into the best schools and then excel there, and the pressure to stand out or at least do well in something is enormous. Most schools have somewhat formal, regimented social hierarchies; even public schools feel more like private schools do on Homeline, with most employing uniforms and careful tracking of students; the private schools are often elite academies catering to the rich (with a number of barely tolerated middle-class scholarship students). Not too surprisingly, many students rebel against the pressure and go “punk,” adopting anti-social attitudes and lifestyles.

Around the world, some people have become vigilantes or masked crimefighters, using strange technologies and psychic powers to investigate and expose the worst abuses of giant corporations and corrupt governments, or to keep their own neighborhoods safe from criminal gangs.

Cyberme is a great opportunity to permit somewhat nontraditional vampire PCs into the campaign (see p. 26).

Cyberme-1, 2017

Current Affairs

Gigantic corporations vie with one another to influence consumers and governments in a world that looks like a cross between cyperpunk and anime.

Divergence Point

No clear diverge point, but a cluster of minor decisions by leaders and governments over the last century has steered society toward large corporations having far more influence over governments, and daily life than on Homeline.

Major Civilizations

Western (bipolar), Japanese (unitary).

Great Powers

United States (representative democracy, CR4), European Union (representative democracy, CR4), Japan (representative democracy, CR4).

Worldline Data

TL: 8[^] (TL9[^] in some areas)

Mana Level: Variable; mostly none, but some areas are low mana

Quantum: 6

Infinity Class: Z4

Centrum Zone: Red

Many of the people living in these areas distrust big business and big government; some belong to radical groups or bizarre cults.

Some of those who retire to the country are scientists and engineers who became disillusioned with the corporations for which they used to work. Because of this, it is not too unusual that a few remarkable gadgets are lurking in odd corners, some stolen from government or corporate labs and hidden away by inventors who fear how they might be used, and some simply cobbled together by eccentric geniuses who like tinkering with such things. The cities have similar groups of outsiders, although many of these are simply criminals, terrorists, and private “guns for hire” who care more about their bank accounts than any grand ideals.

Land, Sea, and Sky

Loosened government regulations have led to a number of ecological disasters over the last 50 years. Unrestricted dumping of toxic wastes poisoned the soil and water in many areas around the world. Oil spills and factory explosions have spewed lethal chemicals into the environment. Some sites remain dangerous for years, even decades. In a few cases, whole towns have been polluted so badly they have simply had to be abandoned. If anyone still lives in these blighted areas, how they survive is a mystery.

Economic Concerns

The divergence between rich and poor plays out on the global stage as well. America, the European Union (dominated by the triumvirate of England, France, and Germany), and Japan are all wealthy. China, India, Brazil, Venezuela, Israel, Canada, Australia, Italy, Sweden, South Africa, Russia, and South Korea are all important players, but very much in the second rank of world powers. The oil-rich nations are wealthy, but are merely suppliers of energy.

Most of the rest of the world is poor and struggling. Gigantic mines, oil rigs, and plantation farms dominate much of the landscape. Governments in these countries are primarily corrupt and brutal dictatorships, although some of the smaller nations are idyllic – especially those client states of more powerful nations where the economy is largely based on tourism.

As the cities have grown, rural areas have experienced a combined decline and recovery. Many rural towns have suffered economically, as major businesses left for urban areas, but this has led to an upsurge of small, locally owned businesses, traditional crafts, and the recovery of wilderness areas. Even here, however, the society is often plutocratic, with wealthy landowners enjoying almost as much local status as medieval lords.

People who tire of life in the cities and the corporate hives often leave for a slower-paced life in one of the rural towns.

Mind and Magic

Psionic abilities work on Cyberme. Most people only have latent abilities; however, a few million people, about one out of 1,000, have some small but measurable talent. (In **GURPS** terms, these “small talents” can be modeled with advantages worth up to 20 points.) A few thousand people, about one out of a million, have significant abilities (about 50 to 100 points of abilities). Finally, a few dozen people around the world have powers that built with hundreds of points – these can genuinely be called superpowers.

Simply having psychic abilities is not a crime, but the abuse of one’s psionic abilities carries stiff penalties (when it can be proved), frequently involving prison terms in special facilities. There is little social stigma to having psionic abilities, mostly because they are often useful in one way or another, and a corporation or government agency will usually recruit kids with such abilities while they are still in high school. Often, their university educations will be paid for in return for a multiyear contract. In fact, a number of government-sponsored schools exist in many countries for children who have psychic abilities. Along with the regular curriculum, these children are trained to use their abilities more effectively and more safely.

Psionic abilities can be easily handled with the rules from **GURPS Psionic Powers**, but GMs are free to develop alternate approaches if they wish to do so.

GURPS Action might be a good framework for a high-octane campaign that revolves around Cyberme. The Transhuman Action! templates from Pyramid #3/15: Transhuman Space might also be useful.

Cyberme is mostly a no-mana world, but some sparsely populated areas – such as ancient forests, mountain ranges (like the Carpathians), areas of Ireland and Wales, and parts of the American West and South – are low mana. In addition, all regions of Cyberme are home to ghosts and other spirit creatures, which in this timeline rely on an entirely different kind of supernatural energy than mana. They are not very common and tend to stay hidden, but will occasionally appear to help mortals they have decided to befriend or to torment those they wish to bedevil.

STRANGE TECHNOLOGIES

Another point where Cyberme diverges from Homeline is its technology. Officially, Cyberme is listed as TL 8⁺. Everyday life is late TL8, with a few early TL9 items in common use as well. In addition, Cyberme has clearly reached TL9 in a few areas such as robotics and artificial intelligence. Subtle differences between the physical laws of Cyberme and Homeline mean that engineers and scientists can sometimes achieve results here that would not be possible on other timelines. In addition, psionic abilities can augment some technological devices. For these reasons, Cyberme-1 is classified as a “superscience” timeline.

Governments and large corporations pour a tremendous amount of money into research. It would be completely reasonable for a GM to introduce prototypes of new mecha (e.g., mecha that can fly because they include a generator for boosting levitation powers if the pilot already has psychic abilities), new kinds of robots, new genetically engineered creatures, and so on, as anything from toys for the PCs to the Big Secret behind some mystery.

Robotics Big and Small

Robots are widely used in industry; in addition, scientists are developing prototype humanoid robots with sophisticated interaction protocols to serve as servants and companions for the very rich. Many of these robots clearly have some kind of emergent sapience, although the exact extent of their “humanity” has yet to be determined. (In *GURPS* terms, robots from Cyberme can employ any TL9 body and software, as described in *GURPS Ultra-Tech*.)

Government labs have overseen the development of battlesuit technology and, on an experimental basis, humanoid tanks known as mecha. Some of these can be piloted by anyone, but others have been designed with special neural or psionic interfaces that increase response time (treat as +1 to Basic Speed), but only with certain people who are naturally attuned to the technology.

A number of battlesuits have fallen into the hands of eccentrics, dissidents, terrorists, and criminals. While these rogue elements can be overtaken by the armaments of government forces, these stolen battlesuits can prove devastating weapons against lightly armored or unarmored opponents, such as most corporate security and police forces.

Most Cyberme battlesuits are similar to the TL9 powered combat armor described in *GURPS Ultra-Tech* (pp. 183-186). A 30-foot mecha is, for all practical purposes, a scaled-up version

of the TL9 powered combat armor suit. It is SM +4, costs \$9,000,000, uses 10 F-cells per 18 hours of operation, weighs 8.5 tons, and provides Move +20, DR 300/200 protection, Lifting ST 90, Striking ST 90, and Super Jump 1. Treat it as having HP 100, Hnd/SR +2/2, a loaded weight of 10 tons, and a load of 1.5 tons. It has all the other normal capabilities of the powered combat armor. It is piloted by Driving (Mecha). In most models, a single pilot controls all operations. Some mecha, however, have room in their torsos for one or two passengers, which allows them to be used for rescue operations or similar missions.

Mecha are not in wide use for the simple reason that, in most tactical situations, a 30-foot-tall target is a lot less survivable than a tank that can hide behind a sand dune. However, there are some terrains and tactical situations – such as mountainous country and certain urban environments – where mecha are actually more useful than either tanks or helicopters.

Genetics

Another area where Cyberme scientists have been ambitious is genetic engineering. There have been some remarkable success stories, particularly in medicine and agriculture. However, there have also been some truly disastrous failures. Attempts to engineer human children with psionic abilities led only to the creation of freakish monstrosities; some of these extremely dangerous human monsters escaped from their labs and not all of these have been captured (several are very adept at looking like normal human beings, at least for a while) and some of them are still at large. The oldest of them would be in their 20s, but others are still children.

Perhaps even more significant was the accidental release in the early 1990s of several gene-altering viruses into the environment, which resulted in the emergence of two new subspecies of humanity – cat people and vampires. A much more widespread but far less serious effect of these viruses is that about one child in 50 is born with very unusual hair and/or eye colors.

The cat people are highly agile human beings with cat ears, tails, sharp teeth, and diamond-shaped pupils giving them night vision and a reduced ability to distinguish between colors.

The vampires are not magical undead. Instead, they are human beings with a dietary disorder that requires them to consume either human blood or a special supplement along with eating regular food. They need about one pint of blood per week or a dose of the supplement; if they do not get it, they start to crave it. Eventually, over a period of months, if they get no blood or supplement, they sicken and die. The supplement or a sufficient amount of blood costs about \$50 to \$100 per week. Vampires are stronger and faster than ordinary human beings and are naturally charismatic, but they are also pale and have a potentially fatal allergy to sunlight. Fortunately, extended exposure is required for actual damage to occur, and most shaded areas are sufficient to provide protection. Vampires who must travel in the daytime often sport large parasols.

About one child in 20,000 born since 1995, maybe 1,000,000 in all, are either cat people or vampires. In 2017, the oldest of them have entered their undergraduate years at various universities.

*For campaign advice and insight into the “giant robot” portion of Cyberme, check out *GURPS Mecha*.*

Turning Spaceships into Mecha

Cyberme mecha are not designed using the guidelines from *Spaceships 4: Fighters, Carriers, and Mecha*. The mecha designs provided in the *Spaceships* books assume that they are – for all practical purposes – humanoid spaceships. This means they are designed with flight in mind, and armor is deliberately kept light to facilitate movement and maneuverability. However, the mecha used on Cyberme-1 are (for the most part) ground-based humanoid tanks, and can be built with much heavier armor. Instead, the design on p. 25 treats them as scaled up battlesuits, employing the same basic design principle used in the *Spaceships* supplements. The assumption is that – for every increase in SM – cost, weight, and power usage increase by a factor of about three (for simplicity, a 3-10-30-100-etc. scale is used). Armor protection increases as per the Size/Range table (i.e., adding about 50% per SM over 0).

The TL9 powered combat armor is SM 0 (able to fit through normal-sized doors for house-to-house fighting). Thus, the TL9 SM +4 mecha weighs and costs about 100 times as much the TL9 powered combat armor, uses roughly 100 times as much energy from power cells, and provides four additional “steps” of armor (increasing DR from 70/50 to 300/200). As four levels on the Size/Range table corresponds to a factor of about five, certain other attributes such as the level of increased ST for the mecha were estimated using this figure – the average effective ST for the TL9 powered combat armor is 20 and the average effective ST for the mecha on p. 25 is 100. Naturally, the characteristics for specific designs can vary to some extent. These principles could be used to design a wide range of mecha, oversized robots, etc.

Psychotronics

Scientists on Cyberme have tried to develop technologies to block or augment psychic abilities. Unlike the breeding programs, these have produced some notable successes, such as static helmets that can block many psionic attacks and power helmets that can improve control of certain existing psionic abilities. The first can be modeled as a form of Psi Static (p. B78), with appropriate gadget limitations; the latter can be modeled as one or more levels of one or more psionic Talents (*Psionic Powers*, p. 5), with appropriate gadget limitations.

VAMPIRES AND CAT PEOPLE

With hundreds of thousands of cat people and vampires, children and teenagers, living around the world, society has had to adapt. In some places, the “new humans” (as they like to be called) have been oppressed. A number of areas have reported infanticide, especially in the Third World. America, Europe, and Japan have attempted to integrate these children in mainstream society. The fact that both cat people and vampires have special talents made this a little easier; strange as they are, they can be used, and so the corporations are willing to help nurture them. Even so, they still suffer widespread prejudice in many places, and many have simply been abandoned by their parents. Other parents have done exactly the opposite, becoming fiercely protective not only of their own “special” children but of their children’s friends as well, especially when those friends who seem to have problems with their own families. Not surprisingly, however, both vampires and cat people tend to associate mostly with their own kind, and they are often highly suspicious of “normals.”

Some unfortunate incidents have occurred. One vampire girl – a popular cheerleader – was arrested in 2016 on six counts of murder; she had been killing local men and draining

them of their blood for two years rather than take her dietary supplement. Six months later, authorities arrested a man with a history of hate crimes for killing two teens and mutilating the bodies in a way that made it look as if a vampire was responsible. In Nigeria, where new humans had suffered from open oppression, a street gang of cat boys terrorized Lagos for several weeks before dispatched by heavily armed soldiers. All of these events have contributed to the mutual distrust between humans and new humans.

Cyberme Vampire

65 points

Vampires tend to be about four inches taller than normal humans and about 10 lbs. heavier, giving them a slender and deceptively delicate-looking build. Most have pale skin, straight black or white-blond hair, and large, dark brown or dark violet eyes.

Attribute Modifiers: ST+3 [30]; DX+1 [20]; HT+1 [10].

Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: Per+1 [5]; Basic Speed+0.5 [10].

Advantages: Charisma 1 [5]; Night Vision 7 [7]; Striking ST +2 [10]; Super Jump 1 [10]; Teeth (Sharp) [1].

Disadvantages: Dependency (Human blood or special dietary supplement; Weekly) [-20]; Social Stigma (Vampire) [-5]*; Uncontrollable Appetite (Human blood; Mitigator, Weekly treatment, -65%) (15) [-2]; Weakness (Sunlight; 1d per 30 minutes) [-15].

Quirks: Distinctive features (Pale) [-1].

* -2 reaction from many people, who consider vampires rather freakish, but +1 from others who consider them interesting, sexy, mysterious, or unfairly victimized.

Story idea: The offworld heroes are exposed to gene-altering viruses (see p. 25). They won't be affected, but their offspring likely will be. (This might be especially stressful for any adventurers who wish to reproduce someday . . .)

Cyberme Cat Person

80 points

Cat people are roughly the same height and weight as normal humans. The color of their tail matches the color of their hair, which is usually black or some shade of brown, red, or orange. The tail has no ability as a grasper or a striker, although it does help with balance. Cat people have eyes that are usually blue, green, yellow, or amber.

Attribute Modifiers: DX +2 [40].

Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: Basic Speed +0.5 [10].

Advantages: Acute Hearing 2 [4]; Night Vision 7 [7]; Perfect Balance [15]; Super Jump 1 [10]; Teeth (Sharp) [1].

Disadvantages: Social Stigma (Cat Person) [-5]*.

Quirks: Distinctive features (cat ears, odd-looking pupils, and furry pussycat tail); Poor color vision [-2]†.

* -2 reaction from many people, who consider cat people rather freakish, but +1 from others who consider them interesting, sexy, cool, cute, or unfairly victimized.

† In situations where distinguishing between colors is important for a successful skill roll, a Perception roll is required; if this is failed, treat the character as having Colorblindness for that skill roll.

HOMELINE, CENTRUM, AND THE CABAL

Homeline has two Penetration Service teams on Cyberme, one based in Paris and one based in Tokyo. At the moment, Cyberme is classified as a Z4 world; it is closed to all parachronic visitors except Infinity personnel and Infinity-licensed researchers.

As far as Infinity can tell, there is not much crosstime criminal activity on Cyberme – its location on Quantum 6 makes it impossible to reach the timeline from Homeline with only a conveyor – but a number of suspicious thefts and kidnappings have taken place over the last few months.

Because of the large number of psychics on Cyberme, the Secret has to be carefully protected. Cyberme is precisely the kind of world where some weird superscience device or psionic world-jumping abilities (see pp. 4-7) might allow parachronic travel. Neither the governments nor the big corporations on Cyberme would be particularly pleased to know that some other world has been spying on them. Nonetheless, as profit-oriented as they are, they might be willing to keep the Secret and come to an agreement with Homeline. If the news was released in the wrong way, however, it could trigger civil unrest; conspiracy theorists on Cyberme would be in seventh heaven if there was actually proof that the big corporations were not only controlling the governments but that they themselves were controlled by some mysterious otherworld cabal.

The Secret is actually very much in danger on Cyberme, more so than Infinity realizes. No one has quite figured out

what Infinity is and what they are doing, but a number of psychics have gotten enough precognitive flashes to have become convinced that there are “strangers” on their world. Several governments are investigating who these strangers may be and what they may want.

Centrum either doesn't yet know about Cyberme, or their operations on this timeline have not yet been discovered by Infinity agents. If they did know about Cyberme, they would probably classify it as Zone Red because of very high technology level and the existence of powerful psychics.

The Cabal knows about Cyberme but mostly ignores it because so little magic exists on this timeline. Grand Master Fang Wu Shih (see *GURPS Cabal* for details) is believed to have established a base of operations here, however, in order to search for and recruit powerful psychics for his organization, or to make sure they do not start working for his enemies.

Same Old, Same Old . . .

It is worth mentioning that many parts of Cyberme appear totally “mundane.” After all, in a city of a million people, there are only going to be a few dozen cat people, a few dozen vampires, a few hundred people with any kind of measurable psychic abilities, and only one or two with truly significant powers such as being able to levitate or inflict pain on others at a distance with their minds. Many people live their entire lives without ever having more than passing contact with any of them. They might see police or soldiers in powered combat armor occasionally, and possibly even mecha, but it is just as likely that the only place they would encounter such things is while watching televised news programs.

ADVENTURES ON CYBERME-1

Cyberme is, first and foremost, a suitable setting for cyberpunk and/or anime-style adventures. It would be a simple matter to design a variety of techno-thriller campaigns with a dark, hard edge, set in cities that combine the best and worst of *film noir*, anime angst, gleaming skyscrapers, and tough, gritty streets. Cyberme would also be a suitable setting for anime-style campaigns ranging from mecha-piloting vigilantes fighting corrupt politicians to the romantic and academic trials of cat girls, vampire boys, and young psychics attending a competitive big-city high school.

Cyberme can also be used as part of an *Infinite Worlds* campaign. Penetration and ISWAT teams may be asked to gain control of experimental technologies such as self-aware robots and psychotronic amplifiers; investigate odd mysteries (and maybe recruit new talent) such as rumors of ghosts or super-powered vigilantes; and make certain that Centrum, the Cabal, or any other undesirables gain a toehold on this potentially dangerous timeline.

The following campaign ideas should provide a sense of what is possible on Cyberme.

Cyberme is a great opportunity for the GM to mix up the expectations of the players. Is it optimistic? Pessimistic? Dark cyberpunk? Bright anime? By alternating the mood over multiple adventures, the same world can feel radically different.

Fast Times at Marasama High School

Life at Marasama High is never easy. A competitive Tokyo high school well-known for its demanding science courses that serves as a feeder campus to several top Japanese universities (and from there to major corporations around the world), its students find the classes tough and some of their classmates tougher. Seniors are always bullying or bribing underclassmen to run errands and take risks for them. Club activities are essential for social networking and even unwinding at the end of the day, but they drink time. In addition, once school is finished for the day, homework, housework, and part-time work rapidly finish off whatever free time most students might have had left.

A number of kids have psychic powers, but most of them have very minor abilities. Typical are the girl who can light cigarettes by pinching the tips between her thumb and index finger (remembering to let go afterwards so she doesn't burn herself) and the boy who can make flowers bloom by sitting in a room with them for an hour or two. Even so, it is possible that some major but undiscovered talents lurk among the students.

The big news at Marasama High (which has been exclusively human until now) is that a few vampires and cat people will be transferring from other schools and joining the student body at the beginning of the next school year.

If the PCs are students, the campaign can focus on their daily struggles, rivalries, and love affairs with other attendees and people at the school. This can be complicated even further if they are the vampires, cat people, or other transfer students who have to get used to the routine at Marasama.

A student-based campaign could also revolve around mysteries. Over the last year, a couple of students have disappeared. The police consider solving this mystery a high priority, but have yet to uncover anything significant. However, students who pay attention to such things might notice that some of the teachers are acting in a very peculiar manner; instructors are always nosy, but these seem to be looking for something in particular – or perhaps *someone*.

If the heroes are adults, they might be government investigators or agents from Infinity looking for powerful psychics or young genius inventors to protect, recruit, and mentor. The last plot idea might be the first chapter in a larger set of adventures about Cyberme locals working with Infinity to protect their world from parochronic threats like Centrum or Things That Man Was Not Meant To Know.

A Quiet Little Village in the Mountains

Friends or colleagues have invited the adventurers – who may be students, young adults starting their careers in one of the big companies, or Infinity agents working undercover – to spend a week-long holiday in the mountain village where their family members have been wealthy landowners for centuries.

While the heroes are enjoying the scenic beauty of the region, disappearances occur. Their friends nervously mention old stories about the Girl Who Died in the Snow, but are uncomfortable going into more detail. If pressed, they will admit that the Girl in question was actually a member of their family who fled the estate after her brothers murdered her commoner lover; she died in a winter storm before her brothers could find her. This was three centuries ago, but over the years people have claimed to see her on occasion. Some people who have gone up the mountain have simply never returned.

Mecha Force Alpha!

The United Nations is putting together a special mecha team for rescue and anti-terrorist operations.

The heroes are mecha pilot candidates; some of them are ex-military or ex-police, while others were recruited out of high school because they have displayed some unusual talent that makes the United Nations think they will make suitable pilots.

The campaign can start with training, with the initial goal of the PCs to simply make it through the rigorous program and be selected for the team. The second part of the campaign can be actual missions. Meanwhile, the heroes will have to deal with rivals and outsiders who want the whole program shut down for one reason or another.

While all this is going on, there are reports that strangers have been seen in the mecha hanger – strangers with the ability to evade the base's security forces with ease. Who are these beings and what do they want?

I Do Not Love Thee, Doctor Fang

Fang Wu Shih has identified two extremely powerful psychics on Cyberme. Both are fugitives, escapees from government labs where they were bred as part of experiments into the development of psychic powers. He intends to contact them, offer them safety and a place in his organization, and either use them on Cyberme to advance his interests there or move them to another timeline. Infinity has gotten a lucky break in getting hold of a defector from Fang's organization, who is willing to tell them what he knows in return for the protection of Infinity. Assuming the source can be trusted, Infinity now has some information on the resources Fang has at his command on Cyberme. (Infinity has no evidence that the defector is lying, although Fang may be using the man as a double agent to learn more about Infinity; this seems unlikely.) At present, Fang only has a group of three moderately powerful psychics. A team of Patrol officers – or possibly an ISWAT team – might be able to deal with Fang's agents and, more importantly, recruit the fugitive psionic talents for Homeline. As a complication, some of the fugitive psionic talents might be mentally unstable; even if Infinity gets to them before Fang does, one or more of them might turn on the adventurers for some bizarre reason.

It would be a simple matter to combine this campaign with the Marasama High School setting (above). The powerful psychics are pretending to be students so they can "hide in plain sight." With the mix of interested parties including the Cabal, Infinity, and fugitive psychic monsters who look like schoolchildren, whoever is trying to solve this mystery (and they may not even know at first that there is a mystery to solve) will need to move quickly or someone is going to die.

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Dr. Mark Gellis teaches professional communication, literature, and humanities, and advises a chapter of the Delta Chi fraternity, at Kettering University. He lives in Flushing, Michigan, with his wonderful wife, Sandra ("She Who Must Be Obeyed"); their lovely and talented daughter, Elizabeth; and their beloved but criminally insane cat, Miss Spock. He squanders much of his free time playing *GURPS* and computer games such as *Harpoon*, reading pretty much anything he can get his hands on, and watching far too many old movies and far too much anime.

MORE HELL PARALLELS

BY STEPHEN DEDMAN

'Tis better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven.
– John Milton, *Paradise Lost*

We didn't say it. Milton said it. And he was blind.
– Neil Gaiman, *Sandman: Season of Mists*

These four hell worlds (*Infinite Worlds*, p. 94) are intended for use in an *Infinite Worlds* campaign, suitable for Infinity infiltration specialists or Miracle Workers' agents – but they can also be used as the setting for a survival campaign, with the possibility of recruitment by Infinity as an ultimate goal.

THE DA VINCI LOAD

Gotha-7 is one of the Gotha parallels (*Infinite Worlds*, p. 128). On this timeline, the cities of Europe and Asia have been abandoned, with most survivors living in well-fortified camps. All other wars have been halted as the living attempt to deal with the zombie menace. Australia and the Americas, including the Spanish colony in Hispaniola, are as yet untouched by the plague (ironically, this means that the only place where Europeans are completely safe from zombies is Haiti).

Attempts to eradicate zombies from some islands and peninsulas have been at least partly successful. In England, King Henry VIII enjoys donning full plate and slaughtering zombies in the home counties, but the rest of Britain is overrun, with only a few thousand survivors remaining. In Japan, recently wracked by famine and earthquakes, the shogun and emperor have become irrelevant: samurai patrol the roads and villages, killing zombies (known there as bakemono) and bandits and anyone they regard as suspicious, keeping some provinces safe while the zombie infestations in the mountains and forests remain largely unchecked.

In the Castello Sforzesco, near Milan, Leonardo da Vinci is working as a military engineer improving small arms and artillery, and creating armored carriages and elaborate traps, which have proved remarkably effective against the unarmed walking dead. Leonardo is currently experimenting with steam turbines with a view to using them to power boats or armored cars. He has also established a military communication network across Italy, using a system of heliographs, colored flags, simple telescopes (3x magnification), and a code of his own devising to allow the camps to warn each other of the zombies' movements.

Gotha-7, 1512

Current Affairs

Countries attempt to eliminate zombies from isolated areas; Leonardo da Vinci's military inventions are proving particularly successful against walking undead.

Divergence Point

Early 1400s; the pneumonic plague mutates into a zombie-creating disease.

Major Civilizations

Western (diffuse).

Great Powers

None; people live in well-fortified towns (feudal or clan/tribal, CR1-2).

Worldline Data

TL: 4+1
Mana Level: Normal
Quantum: 6
Infinity Class: R4
Centrum Zone: Yellow

As an unusual campaign idea: What if every alternate Earth contains a “. . . with zombies” duplicate? Reich-5 – with zombies. Nottingham – with zombies. United States of Lizardia – with zombies. Homeline . . . with zombies?!

The private armies of Italy's aristocratic families, aided by Leonardo's inventions, are making slow but perceptible progress in their effort to rid Italy and nearby islands of zombies. Miracle Workers have been ordered to monitor the situation, but not to interfere.

Leonardo's most successful military inventions include: wheel-lock pistols (p. B278); muskets (use stats for flintlock musket, .75, on p. B279, but reloading time is 20 turns); blunderbusses (p. B279); repeating crossbows (*GURPS Martial Arts*, p. 231); folding and socket bayonets; black powder grenades (p. B277); guillotine-like "shutters" for firing ports and arrow slits (below); volley guns with between eight and 33 barrels (below); improved mountings for cannon to make them easier to reposition; grapeshot for use against unarmored hordes (below); and – his showpiece – a muscle-powered "tank" fitted with scythe blades (below).

Volley guns: Gun barrels arranged in horizontal rows, and sometimes also in vertical stacks (the 33-barrel gun is three stacked rows, 11 barrels wide). When a whole row is fired, use rules for spraying fire (p. B409); barrels may be splayed for maximum dispersal, or parallel for maximum impact in a smaller area. Treat each barrel as a flintlock musket (p. B279); determine how many rounds are fired into a particular hex, and roll accordingly. Reloading time is 20 turns multiplied by the number of barrels divided by the number of loaders (maximum three loaders).

Grapeshot (2.5"): Dmg 2d+1 pi+, Range 3.300, RoF 1x88 (30 turns to reload), Rcl 1.

Shutters: Leonardo has redesigned firing ports and arrow slits in fortifications to be just large enough for a zombie's head,

but too small for its shoulders. Pulling a chain will drop a heavy blade doing 2d cutting damage; "reloading" takes (25-ST) seconds, minimum 2.

Tank: This combines and modifies several of Leonardo's designs. It's a wedge-shaped cart with a one-man cupola and scythe-blade "wings." Motive power is provided by three men pedalling a three-seat tricycle; the front man steers, while the other two fire weapons (usually crossbows or blunderbusses) through the ports. The three-foot blades at the rear are staggered; the pair at the front are five feet from the ground, to catch the necks of tall men; the next pair is a foot below and a foot behind the first; the last, a foot below and behind the second. A fourth soldier, armed with a stabbing broadsword and a rack of loaded guns and grenades, sits atop the tank in a howdah. As it only has a ground clearance of one foot and a top speed of 6 mph, the tank rarely travels far from the castle. It is, however, cheaper than four suits of full plate, does not have to be tailor-made to its users, and offers better protection for soldiers, especially while they reload.

ARMOR VINCI OMNIA

Rafael Valenti, a charismatic criminal wanted by the Patrol, ingratiates himself with the Sforza family, convincing them that the heroes are necromancers responsible for the zombies. When the heroes come to the Castello, they find themselves being used for target practice by soldiers eager to try out Leonardo's new inventions. Even if they survive the first onslaught and manage to enter the castle safely before the soldiers can reload, they'll still have to try to win over the Sforzas if they want to arrest Valenti.

Leonardo's Tank (Bicycling/TL4)

TL	Vehicle	ST/HP	Hnd/SR	HT	Move	LWt.	Load	SM	Occ.	DR	Range	Cost	Loc.
4+1	Tank	55†	-2/4	11	1/3	2.2	0.9	+3	3+1	9	F	\$3,000	GX

Notes

Scythes do 1d cut when tank moves at top speed. Crew takes 1 FP per hour of travel or 10 minutes of combat.

THE DOOMED SHIP OF HOPE

In Gotha-8, it is 12 years after the first reports of Gotha zombies came from Spain (initially dismissed as anti-fascist propaganda). This ended Hitler's plans for world conquest, but not for racial and ideological purity. Stalin, similarly, merely expanded his Great Purge to include the walking dead, slaughtering and then burying or cremating his enemies en masse. British Prime Minister Churchill has imposed martial law in Britain and established concentration camps for illegal immigrants, suspected plague carriers, and political prisoners. Hirohito withdrew troops from China in 1938 to better defend Japanese towns. Most other nations have collapsed into anarchic collections of subsistence-farming communities. The only places totally free from zombies are island communities with no civil air services.

The United States imposed tough quarantine restrictions on overseas travel and immigration, remained free of the plague until 1940, and has fared better than most countries, at least in terms of the survivor/zombie ratio: a somewhat stable populace of nearly 100,000 uninfected citizens, mostly living on or near military bases scattered across the 48 states. Radio and the telephone network have enabled President Truman to maintain control over the armed forces, including (so far) the irregular state militias. In most states, every citizen aged 16 and over is required to be visibly armed at all times; even prisoners on chain gangs carry machetes or similar implements (habitual or violent criminals are executed).

For more post-apocalyptic ideas, review Pyramid #3/3: Venturing Into the Badlands: Post-Apocalypse.

The most common sidearms are .38 revolvers and .45 semi-automatic pistols, but SMGs and sawed-off shotguns are legal in every state. Reconnaissance dirigibles watch over less-inhabited areas and occasionally carpet-bomb derelict towns, and the Coast Guard and Navy also patrol major rivers (most ships and planes have been mothballed as expensive luxuries). Food and fuel are rationed but adequate for most people's needs, and the greenback still has some value – approximately as much as a cigarette, which are also rationed in most states.

Infinity is watching Gotha-8 carefully, mainly to see whether the Reich parallels are interfering with Hitler's Germany. Retired Miracle Worker Leon Meyer (pp. 34-35) has bought the RMS *Titanic* and is using it for rescue operations and a little trading, as well as keeping tabs on the state of the world.

TWO TALES OF GOTHA-8

Cape Crusade: An avid comics collector on Homeline offers to pay up to \$2M apiece for mint editions of the early Superman and Batman comics, and suggests that some may still exist in Gotha-8. If the PCs aren't tempted to venture into DC's offices in Manhattan, others may be – and will need rescuing from the Gotha-zombies.

A Night to Remember: A group of *Titanic* enthusiasts charts the ship for a cruise from Liverpool to New York, and Meyer hires the adventurers as crew. The voyage is mainly uneventful, until a few drunk passengers decide the re-enactment would be incomplete unless

Gotha-8, 1949

Current Affairs

The world attempts to destroy the zombie menace.

Divergence Point

1937; the mutated pneumonic plague puts an end to Hitler's plans for world conquest.

Major Civilizations

Japanese (empire), Orthodox (empire), Western (multipolar).

Great Powers

British Commonwealth (representative democracies under martial law, CR2-4), Germany (dictatorship, CR4-5, CR6 for undesirable), Japan (military oligarchy, CR4-5), Soviet Union (dictatorship, CR5), United States (representative democracy, CR3).

Worldline Data

TL: 6

Mana Level: Low

Quantum: 4

Infinity Class: R4

Centrum Zone: Inaccessible

they take to the lifeboats. The heroes are given the job of rescuing them – even the ones who don't want to be saved.

SVERDLOVSK

Military Compound 19, the biological warfare facility at Sverdlovsk, has been the source of dangerous leaks in many timelines, but none as deadly as the genetically engineered bacillus released during the August 1991 *putsch*.

Sverdlovsk-1 had diverged from Homeline in 1976, when John Glenn became Jimmy Carter's running mate. After a successful rescue of Iranian hostages in 1980, Carter was re-elected and increased efforts to reduce America's dependence on foreign oil. While the early electric cars and hybrids were too expensive to compete with conventional cars in the U.S., they were popular in parts of Asia and Europe, and the improved batteries and solar panels built to power them soon found other uses.

In August 1991, rumors of an invasion by NATO forces reached the leaders of the coup against Gorbachev. They responded with a preemptive strike against NATO and U.S. military targets, using neutron bombs against bases in Germany in the hope of capturing them. Whether the Tithonus plague was released accidentally or deliberately (the base was destroyed when NATO retaliated), it killed more than 100 million people

within a year – more than the nukes or the conventional warfare. By 2011, the world's population had dropped to barely half its 1991 level and was still declining.

The Tithonus plague approximately doubles normal rates of growth and aging in most mammals, birds, and reptiles (Short Lifespan 1). It greatly accelerates the metastasis of existing cancers and can cause cardiac arrest in the unfit. For humans who were exposed and not immune, this mostly meant an earlier death from degenerative diseases. For a few, exposed before adolescence, it also caused gigantism or other mutation. Worse still, it greatly increased the risk of women dying in childbirth. (For women giving birth with medical assistance, roll vs. Physician plus TL, and again for HT. Women giving birth unassisted only roll vs HT. Those who survive giving birth are at +5 to survive later births.)

As the older politicians and other leaders died, and younger people saw little reason to plan for the future, society began to disintegrate – particularly in Eastern Europe, where rival warlords were quick to grab food supplies and military equipment.

A mission to a hell world can be a compliment of sorts: "You're the only ones we trust with this . . ." In this case, the trick is coming up with a hellish mission that's important enough to risk the "good" agents.

Manufacturing slowed to a tiny fraction of its pre-1991 level, except in communities fortified against looters and with

Sverdlovsk-1, 2023

Current Affairs

The world tries to survive each day, with larger, immunized communities attempting to restore civilization.

Divergence Point

1976; John Glenn becomes vice presidential running mate for U.S. President Jimmy Carter.

Major Civilizations

Western (diffuse).

Great Powers

None; people live in fortified communities (feudal or clan/tribal, CR3-5).

Worldline Data

TL: 7+1

Mana Level: Low

Quantum: 5

Infinity Class: Z4

Centrum Zone: Inaccessible

sustainable power supplies. By the time Infinity discovered Sverdlovsk-1 in 2020, the world's population was down to one billion, and the cities had been abandoned by everyone but a few scavengers who'd managed to hoard enough preserved food.

In 2022, Miracle Workers developed a vaccine against Tithonus: It returned aging to the normal rate, but did not reverse it. Most people in the technocratic enclaves and the larger farming communities have been immunized, but there are still plenty of nomads who would rather loot than labor. The most dangerous are "speedfreaks" – rare mutants able to move at twice normal human speed. Another hazard for anyone venturing outside the enclaves is the wildlife; some animals exposed to Tithonus, with adequate food supply, have grown to gigantic size. Explorers have reported seeing rats as large as dogs, dogs as big as bears, puma-sized feral cats, snakes and crocodiles 50-feet long, and more.

QUICK AND THE DEAD

The PCs are taking a large supply of Tithonus vaccine to communities in Sverdlovsk-1's Nebraska, when they're ambushed by Terry Wilkes (pp. 33-34) and his gang. In the battle, one of the speedfreaks is wounded in the leg and captured.

Infinity is interested in the speedfreaks because of their potential value as soldiers, if they can be successfully recruited. However, as no one has ever given Tithonus vaccine to a speedfreak, it's unknown what the result will be: Will it slow him down, have no effect, or kill him? The PCs will have to decide what is best done with their hostage, particularly as they're in hostile territory several days from the nearest community.

TELLER

In all of the Teller parallels, nuclear war broke out between the USSR and U.S. in October 1962. All major military targets and strategically important cities along the United States' west and south coasts were nuked, as were those in Russia. Fallout, firestorms, nuclear winter, conventional warfare and new diseases (mutated or artificial) have killed billions in the northern hemisphere, but have mostly spared the south.

Wealthy survivors from the northern hemisphere fled to the warmer and safer climes. Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Indonesia, New Zealand, Rhodesia, and South Africa were the most popular destinations for those who could buy passage and resident status. When Teller-4 was discovered by Infinity, the weather had returned to normal worldwide, and radiation levels were down to less than 1 rad/week except in Cuba, Russia west of the Urals, and along the U.S. east coast. Most of Europe, Africa, and the Asian mainland, however, were in ruins after years of warfare, while much of North America was overgrown by mutant strains of broomrape, hemlock, hogweed, and snakeroot. Scavengers, bandits, slavers and cannibals wandered the wasteland, trading with and/or stealing from the few subsistence farming communities that survived

among the devastation. Feral animals have interbred with wild species and zoo escapees, creating savage new species. The most feared pests, however, are rats with a venomous bite (treat as normal rats, p. B461, but with any bite that inflicts damage injecting rattler venom, p. B458). Snakes, however, have all but died out north of the 37th parallel.

The nations that endured have allowed some refugees to enter, but the numbers have declined over the years. Miracle Workers and White Star Traders have spent the past decade secretly aiding the recovery on Teller-4 by introducing inventions that will boost its technology (particularly in medicine), assisting with the rebuilding of cities, and making investments in the hope of ending the ongoing worldwide recession. Sometimes, too, they will send combatants to wipe out the most troublesome marauders or lead a revolt against slave-owners or despots.

JAILBREAK ON TELLER-4

A young woman arrives at the Miracle Workers' hospital in Teller-4's London. She claims to have escaped from a women's prison, which had been taken over by men shortly after the war.

Conversely, a deliberate mission to a hell world might be a punishment for those who failed on a high-profile mission.

The more attractive women were forced to work as sex slaves, while others were killed. Children born there were also used as slaves; the more tractable males joined the “guards,” while the rest were killed. None of the original inmates survived; the slaves are their children or grandchildren, or have been taken

(abducted or traded) from nearby towns. The prison is well fortified, and its occupants heavily armed.

Miracle Workers decide that the woman’s story is plausible, and send the heroes to determine whether it’s true – and if true, whether it’s feasible to rescue the slaves.

Teller-4, 1997

Current Affairs

The various small nations that survived are making strides to redefine themselves in the wake of a nuclear war.

Divergence Point

1962; nuclear war broke out between the U.S. and USSR.

Major Civilizations

Western (diffuse).

Great Powers

Argentina (representative democracy, CR3), Australia (representative democracy, CR3), Brazil (representative democracy, CR3), Indonesia (representative democracy, CR3), New Zealand (representative democracy, CR3), Rhodesia (representative democracy, CR3), South Africa.

Worldline Data

TL: 6

Quantum: 7

Centrum Zone: Inaccessible

Mana Level: Low

Infinity Class: R4

THE HELLS’ DENIZENS

Here are two of the major characters from some of the hell worlds described in this article.

TERRY WILKES, “SPEEDFREAK” BANDIT LEADER

265 points

Born in Sverdlovsk-1’s Saint Louis in 2002, Terry Wilkes learned to steal food almost as soon as he could walk. His mother Rose was a waitress, part-time prostitute, and semi-professional shoplifter with a methamphetamine habit. His father – Rose’s dealer and occasional pimp – used him as a runner and taught him to fight. By the time Terry was 10, he was leading a vicious gang of river pirates. He committed his first murder at 13, in a raid that netted the gang several working multi-fuel amphibious jeeps. These enabled them to strike further inland, and to move their hideouts more often.

Wilkes’ M.O. is well known throughout the Midwest: “Slowpokes” in his gang make one or more diversionary attacks to assess the strength of their opponents; then, unless he decides an attack is too risky, Wilkes will lead his fellow speedfreaks in a charge. While mostly concerned with stealing food, fuel, and ammunition, his gang will take anything easily portable that can be bartered for essentials.

Terry is a thin, clean-shaven man with receding strawberry blond hair, knife scars on face and hands, and pale blue eyes.

Although he looks about 40, he’s actually 21. He usually wears woodland camouflage and jungle boots.

ST 11 [10]; **DX** 13 [60]; **IQ** 11 [20]; **HT** 11 [10].

Damage 1d-1/1d+1; BL 24 lbs.; HP 12 [2]; Will 11 [0]; Per 12 [5]; FP 12 [3].

Basic Speed 6.00 [0]; Basic Move 6 [0]; Dodge 10*; Parry 11* (Shortsword).
5’8”; 110 lbs.

Social Background

TL: 6 [0].

CF: Western [0].

Languages: English (Native) [0].

Advantages

Altered Time Rate 1 [100]; Charisma 1 [5]; Combat Reflexes [15]; Danger Sense [15]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Night Vision 2 [2]; Temperature Tolerance 1 [1]; Very Fit [15]; Very Rapid Healing [15].

Disadvantages

Berserk (15) [-5]; Bully (12) [-10]; Code of Honor (Pirate’s) [-5]; Greed (15) [-7]; Increased Consumption 1 [-10]; On the Edge (15) [-7]; Overconfidence (12) [-5]; Reputation -4 (Thief and murderer; All inhabitants of Midwest and southern U.S., 10 or less) [-6]; Short Lifespan 1 [-10]; Skinny [-5].

Hell parallels are also excellent complications to inflict on heroes whose technology fails.

Quirks: Alcohol intolerance but recovers twice as fast as normal; Distractible; Incompetence (Singing); Mild allergy to dairy products; Never wears a hat or helmet. [-5]

Skills

Area Knowledge (Mississippi Basin) (E) IQ [1]-11; Armoury/TL(7+1) (Small Arms) (A) IQ-1 [1]-10; Boating/TL(7+1) (Unpowered) (A) DX+1 [4]-14; Brawling (E) DX+1 [2]-14; Carousing (E) HT [1]-11; Driving/TL(7+1) (Automobile) (A) DX [2]-13; Fast-Talk (A) IQ [2]-11; Filch (A) DX [2]-13; First Aid/TL(7+1) (E) IQ [1]-11; Fishing (E) Per [1]-12; Guns/TL(7+1) (Rifle) (E) DX+1 [2]-14; Hiking (A) HT-1 [1]-10; Leadership (A) IQ+2 [4]-13†; Mechanic/TL(7+1) (Multi-Fuel Engine) (A) IQ-1 [1]-10; Observation (A) Per [2]-12; Running (A) HT+1 [4]-12; Scrounging (E) Per+1 [2]-13; Shortsword (A) DX+2 [8]-15; Stealth (A) DX+1 [4]-14; Streetwise (A) IQ [2]-11; Survival (Mountains) (A) Per+1 [4]-13; Swimming (E) HT [1]-11.

* Includes +1 from Combat Reflexes.

† Includes +1 from Charisma.

Equipment

Assault rifle, 7.62mmS, with bayonet and one spare clip; revolver, .38; cutlass; survival knife; ballistic vest under camo fatigues; reinforced boots; binoculars; personal basics.

DR. LEON MEYER, MIRACLE WORKERS' SPECIAL FIELD AGENT

336 points

Leon Meyer was born in Metz, Alsace-Lorraine, in 1910, in what would become the hell parallel Teller-4. His father, a German Jew who'd married a French Catholic, took the family to England two days after the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, fearing that war was inevitable and would divide his family. Leon, already fluent in German, French, Hebrew, and Latin, quickly learned English, and was accepted into Oxford at 15, reading classics.

Fascinated by ancient history since his first visit to the British Museum, Leon spent most of the 1930s accompanying archaeological expeditions in the Middle East, until the outbreak of World War II. Rather than accept the offer of a desk job with military intelligence, he became a forward observer with the Royal Artillery. He was taken prisoner in 1940, and after some minor acts of sabotage, led another seven prisoners in a successful escape attempt. He was captured five times and helped engineer more than 50 successful escapes before the Nazis made the mistake of sending him to a subcamp of Auschwitz in 1943. After learning of the fate of his fellow Jews there, Leon spent the rest of the war coordinating the rescue of inmates from prison camps. Able to impersonate German officers and forge official documents, he also supplied hundreds of prisoners with food,

Wilkes' Gang

Wilkes' gang varies in size, but is usually twice the size of the PCs' posse (more if the PCs catch them in their lair with their camp-followers). A third of them will be male speedfreaks, with gear the same as his own; the rest are "slowpokes" of either sex, with cheaper gear. The gang has one multi-fuel plug-in hybrid off-road vehicle (use stats for Jeep, p. B464; water Move is 1/3), for every four members (round up).

Speedfreaks

As for Wilkes, but without Charisma or Danger Sense; -1 to either IQ and IQ-based skills, or DX and DX-based skills; 40 points of disadvantages from bandits' list (see p. 38).

Slowpokes

Use bandits on p. 38. Add Rapid Healing to advantages, and Increased Consumption 1 and Short Lifespan 1 to disadvantages. The slowpokes in Wilkes's gang are equipped with lever-action carbines, .30, with 2d+2 rounds of ammo; axes; personal basics; and 1d assorted bullets (for barter and gambling).

medicine, maps, passports, weapons, and the means to sabotage war industries staffed with slave labor.

After the war ended, Leon returned to work as an archaeologist, sometimes going undercover to infiltrate the trade in stolen antiquities and helping Jews and political prisoners escape from the Soviet Union. This phase of his career ended with the nuclear war in 1962, when Meyer turned his talents to helping refugees reach safety in Australia and New Zealand, using a triage system very like that of Miracle Workers.

Twelve years later, when Teller-4 was discovered by Infinity, Leon Meyer was already a legendary figure, credited with rescuing thousands of people as well as many invaluable books, scientific instruments and artworks. He was also suffering the effects of his excursions into the northern hemisphere, including numerous cancers untreatable with Teller-4's medical technology. Miracle Workers offered him treatment and the option of either continuing to work in Teller-4, or to join the organization and help those in other hell worlds. He joined Miracle Workers initially as a trainer, but he soon returned to field work in other parallels.

At the age of 75, Leon was exploring Gotha-8 when he discovered that the RMS *Titanic* had not sunk in that timeline, but was moored in Liverpool, stranded by a lack of coal. He stripped the ship of anything that could be profitably sold to Homeline's *Titanic* enthusiasts and used the proceeds to return her to running order, replacing her boilers with a second-hand nuclear reactor bought on Gernsback. He then semi-retired, using the ship to patrol the islands and coastlines, trading food and cheap 9mm SMGs for anything that had value on Homeline, lending aid where he could and continuing to teach the trainee Miracle Workers' who served as crew.

*If the heroes are going to spend a lot of time on an alternate **Titanic**, some research will greatly enhance the experience. A search for "titanic blueprints" will pop up many hits, and titanic-online.com also contains a wealth of information.*

On all other known timelines where Leon Meyer was born, he and his mother died of flu in 1919.

Now 81, Leon Meyer is completely bald, with a weathered complexion and dark brown eyes. He generally wears black coveralls, combat boots, and a knit cap. He rarely carries a weapon.

ST 10 [0]; **DX** 11 [20]; **IQ** 15 [100]; **HT** 13 [30].

Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 15 [0]; Per 15 [0]; FP 13 [0].

Basic Speed 6.00 [0]; Basic Move 6 [0]; Dodge 9; Parry 9 (Brawling).
5'9"; 120 lbs.

Social Background

TL: 8 [0].

CF: Western [0].

Languages:* Ancient Greek (Accented) [2]; Arabic (Accented) [2]; Archaic Egyptian (Accented) [2]; English (Native) [4]; French (Native) [4]; German (Native) [0]; Hebrew (Native) [4]; Italian (Accented) [2]; Latin (Accented) [2]; Mandarin Chinese (Accented) [2]; Modern Greek (Accented) [2]; Persian (Accented) [2]; Polish (Accented) [2]; Russian (Accented) [2]; Sanskrit (Accented) [2]; Spanish (Accented) [2].

Advantages

Charisma 1 [5]; Danger Sense [15]; Daredevil [15]; Eidetic Memory [5]; Flexibility [5]; Language Talent [10]; Longevity [2]; Night Vision 3 [3]; Reputation +4 (Legendary rescue worker; Infinity and on some hell worlds; 10 or less) [5]; Resistant to Disease (+8) [5]; Sensitive [5]; Temperature Tolerance 2 [2]; Versatile [5]; Voice [10].

Perks: Honest Face [1].

Disadvantages

Charitable (15) [-7]; Curious (12) [-5]; Duty (Infinity; 15 or less) [-15]; Lecherousness (15) [-7]; Pacifism (Cannot Harm Innocents) [-10]; Selfless (15) [-2]; Sense of Duty (Innocent Victims) [-15]; Skinny [-5]; Timesickness [-10]; Unique [-5]; Workaholic [-5].

Quirks: Agnostic but identifies as Jewish; Compulsive spending, but only on books; Doesn't drink or smoke; Hates being called "Alsatian" (reacts at -2); Imaginative. [-5]

Skills

Acting (A) IQ [2]-15; Administration (A) IQ-1 [1]-14; Anthropology (H) IQ-1 [2]-14; Archaeology (H) IQ+1 [8]-16; Area Knowledge (Teller-4) (E) IQ [1]-15; Area Knowledge (Gotha-8) (E) IQ [1]-15; Armoury/TL8 (Small Arms) (A) IQ-1 [1]-14; Artist (Drawing) (H) IQ [4]-15; Boating/TL8 (Motorboat) (A) DX+1

[4]-12; Brawling (E) DX+1 [2]-12; Camouflage (E) IQ [1]-15; Carousing (E) HT [1]-13; Cartography (A) IQ [2]-15; Climbing (A) DX+3 [2]-14†; Computer Operation/TL8 (E) IQ [1]-15; Connoisseur (Visual Arts) (A) IQ [2]-15; Cryptography (H) IQ-1 [2]-14; Dancing (A) DX-1 [1]-10; Detect Lies (H) Per [4]-15; Diplomacy (H) IQ+1 [2]-16‡; Disguise/TL8 (A) IQ-1 [1]-14; Driving/TL8 (Car) (A) DX+1 [4]-12; Electronics Operation/TL8 (Scientific) (A) IQ [2]-15; Escape (H) DX+2 [2]-13‡; Explosives/TL6 (Demolition) (A) IQ-1 [1]-14; Fast-Talk (A) IQ+2 [2]-17‡; Filch (A) DX-1 [1]-10; First Aid/TL8 (E) IQ+1 [2]-16; Fishing (E) Per [1]-15; Forgery/TL8 (H) IQ-1 [2]-14; Forward Observer/TL6 (A) IQ [2]-15; Freight Handling/TL6 (A) IQ [2]-15; Geology (H) IQ-2 [1]-13; Guns/TL8 (Pistol) (E) DX [1]-11; Guns/TL8 (Rifle) (E) DX+1 [2]-12; Hiking (A) HT+1 [4]-14; History (Jewish) (H) IQ [4]-15; Holdout (A) IQ-1 [1]-14; Intelligence Analysis/TL6 (H) IQ [4]-15; Knife (E) DX [1]-11; Leadership (A) IQ+1 [2]-16§; Linguistics (H) IQ [4]-15; Literature (H) IQ-1 [2]-14; Lockpicking/TL6 (A) IQ-1 [1]-14; Mechanic/TL6 (Diesel engine) (A) IQ-1 [1]-14; Merchant (A) IQ [2]-15; Mimicry (Speech) (H) IQ+1 [2]-16‡; Navigation/TL6 (Sea) (A) IQ [2]-15; NBC Suit/TL8 (A) DX+1 [4]-12; Observation (A) Per [2]-15; Parachuting/TL6 (E) DX [1]-11; Photography/TL6 (A) IQ-1 [1]-14; Propaganda/TL6 (A) IQ-1 [1]-14; Research/TL6 (A) IQ+1 [4]-16; Riding (Equine) (A) DX-1 [1]-10; Savoir-Faire (High Society) (E) IQ [1]-15; Scrounging (E) Per+1 [2]-16; Scuba/TL8 (A) IQ-1 [1]-14; Search (A) Per+1 [4]-16; Seamanship/TL8 (E) IQ [1]-15; Sex Appeal (A) HT+2 [2]-15‡; Shiphandling/TL6 (Ship) (H) IQ [4]-15; Singing (E) HT+2 [1]-15‡; Smuggling (A) IQ [2]-15; Soldier (A) IQ-1 [1]-14; Speed-Reading (A) IQ [2]-15; Stealth (A) DX+1 [4]-12; Streetwise (A) IQ [2]-15; Survival (Radioactive Wasteland) (A) Per+1 [4]-16; Swimming (E) HT [1]-13; Teaching (A) IQ-1 [1]-14; Writing (A) IQ-1 [1]-14.

* All costs reduced for Language Talent.

† Includes +3 from Flexibility.

‡ Includes +2 from Voice.

§ Includes +1 from Charisma.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Stephen Dedman is the author of *GURPS Dinosaurs* and the novels *Shadowrun: A Fistful of Data*; *The Art of Arrow Cutting*; *Shadows Bite*; and *Foreign Bodies*. He has also written a number of *Pyramid* articles and other RPG material, plus more than 100 short stories published in an eclectic variety of magazines and anthologies.

He is co-owner of Fantastic Planet, a science fiction and fantasy bookshop in Perth, Australia, and is trying to save enough experience points to buy off the long-standing Wealth (Struggling) disadvantage. For more information, check out stephendedman.com.

I'm not concerned about all hell breaking loose, but that a part of hell will break loose . . . it'll be much harder to detect.

– George Carlin

RANDOM THOUGHT TABLE

AN INFINITE ROAD MAP BY STEVEN MARSH, *PYRAMID* EDITOR

The *Infinite Worlds* setting is big, potentially encompassing just about every possible campaign imaginable. This creates a conundrum present in any large setting: If anything is possible, how does anything become meaningful? (Admittedly, on our own world, philosophers have struggled with the issue of “What’re we doing here?!” since the dawn of time, so it’s a long-known design flaw.)

Here are some tips that, while specific to the *Infinite Worlds* setting, should find some applicability to other large campaigns.

ORDER UP!

The “default” assumption for many *Infinite Worlds* campaigns is that the heroes receive orders of some sort from a hierarchal organization. “We’ve gotten word that Centrum is attempting to destroy Lunar Big Ben on Wembley-2. Stop them!” Such a structure makes a great deal of sense, because it keeps the action moving: The players can go from sitting down at the table to the thick of the action in a handful of minutes.

However, taking orders can also make the heroes feel railroaded. When you’re presented with the wonders of the cosmos and then forced to deal with a single task, it’s like going to Disney World but being forced to stay inside a bubble-shelled golf cart.

So how do you keep the players from feeling steamrollered?

It’s Your Call

One way is for the hierarchy to charge the heroes with performing a task, but give them great leeway into *how* they accomplish their goal. For example, the PCs might be informed that intelligence believes there will be a credible assassination attempt on the British queen of Wembley-2 sometime in the next two months, and it’s up to the investigators to determine *how* they want to deal with it. Infiltrate the queen’s court? Candidly inform people in power? Try to suss out the scheme?

In this case, the GM needs to make sure that “success” and “failure” is well-defined – both to enable him to evaluate the

potential for success by the heroes, and so the PCs know when they’ve wrapped things up and can go home. This can be especially tricky for more nebulous plots, or for players who delight in coming up with lateral-thinking solutions to problems. (“You managed to stop Reich-5 from blowing up the bridge by . . . blowing it up *yourself*?! Explain how that’s useful. Quickly.”)

We Don’t Know What’s Going On

Or perhaps the heroes are given even *more* free rein. “Guys? We intercepted a communiqué from Centrum that indicates they’ve got something planned on Wembley-2 that’ll be huge. And . . . that’s all we know. We’re guessing you’ve got less than a year to sort it out. Good luck!” In this regard, the heroes have an entire world to explore – like a more open campaign setting – but they also have an overarching goal to accomplish. Plus, once they finish, they can dash to their next assignment.

How open the setting feels depends on what the heroes know about the time frame of the larger mission. A mandate that consists of “explore the world, pursue the agency’s larger goals, and keep your eyes open for something big in the coming year” will have a much more leisurely feel than “There’s something big that could happen *at any moment!!!!*” In the case of the latter example, the players will almost certainly hit the larger mystery with the biggest hammers they can utilize, perhaps negating the openness of the freedom given them.

So, What Next?

Alternatively, the heroes might get the opportunity to provide input on long-range plans. This is an even freer version of the previous one: Instead of being given a specific long-term mission to figure out and complete control over how to accomplish it, they only have a goal – “cement our position here against Centrum” or “disrupt Reich-5 activities on this world as best you can.”

Campaign idea: The PCs are world-jumpers in the former employ of Infinity, now disavowed (but kept out of Coventry). They now act as freelance good guys with the same general goals as Infinity but having to stay far off the organization’s radar.

In this case, the heroes might either be given a timeframe for how long they'll be left to their own devices, or the adventurers might get to dictate when they want a new assignment. (As an option that works fairly well, the *players* can let the GM know when they would like to see other vistas, and in return, he can declare, "Well, your higher-ups have decided you've done as much as you can here for now . . ." This avoids the situation of having heroes who would logically be inclined to stay on a world, yet whose players wouldn't mind traveling on.)

It's a great big universe, and we're all really puny . . .
– "Yakko's Universe," *Animaniacs*

Plot and Scheme

To include a greater freedom within a hierarchal campaign – while still providing enough of a framework to guide the heroes if they need it – consider giving the heroes latitude against an agency . . . by any means necessary.

Thus the PCs might be part of the elite Anti-Reich Task Squad, given total authority to explore the cosmos as much as they want, provided they actively search out and act against the activities of Reich-5. Go wherever, do whatever, just keep up the fight against the enemy. (Of course, this liberty isn't infinite – presumably the heroes need to provide proof of tasks and results periodically.) This option is a good one for advanced players who enjoy a lot of latitude but still want some kind of structure in case they are utterly stymied or run out of "fun stuff" to do.

As a final possibility here, the heroes might not be part of an agency, but still feel compelled to act against another organization. Perhaps they are free agents with parachronic technology, trying to thwart Reich-5 but actively avoiding the Infinity Patrol. In this case, the heroes are self-directed, but the group has the overarching goal to keep them motivated and active.

MYSTERIES ABOUND

If the heroes aren't reliant on an organization for marching orders, they might still be hooked into an overarching plot that keeps them active on alternate worlds. To better explore the grandeur of the *Infinite Worlds* cosmos, one of the best ways to accomplish this is via a timeline-spanning mystery. A desire to figure out what's going on – either to fulfill another goal or just the satisfaction of discovery – can provide sufficient motivation to keep the party active for a long time. The core *Infinite Worlds* book provides a number of hooks that can offer an inducement to explore across multiple timelines (when in doubt, add the Cabal).

Obviously, any advice for running long-term mysteries is suitable here. In particular, the GM should definitely have a solid idea of what the underlying mystery is – it's possible to fake it for a bit, but eventually the pieces need to fall

together satisfyingly. (See the *X-Files* for how not to do this.) In addition, the mystery should probably be one that is compelling enough for the heroes to want to keep pursuing, but not so vital, Earth(s)-shattering, or provable that they feel compelled to run to more powerful authorities to fix it. Perhaps those they would most logically turn to are implicated in the mystery!

PROFESSIONAL MATTERS

As another possibility, if the heroes are tied to a profession, they might be able to set their own agenda. Some jobs are especially well-suited (besides "Infinity Patrol agent" – we covered that one already!). Archaeologists have ample cause to want to explore a huge number of alternate worlds, and are a good justification for almost any kind of adventure (see Lara Croft and Bernice Summerfield as two examples.) Many kinds of writers and other media creators would love to visit other places. If Homeline has any type of entertainment akin to our own "extreme sports" or reality television, those two possibilities alone would benefit greatly from the ability to world-hop. ("This week on *Most Dangerous Sports*, we take a tour of the largest freestanding lavapit on Maui-2!")

Ultimately a profession provides the freedom to explore tempered with a self-imposed goal that enables the players to focus enough to make sense of the infinite worlds. Ideally any profession chosen is broad enough that the heroes have access to a variety of potential adventures, and open-ended enough so that there isn't a danger of the PCs fulfilling their life goals and retiring.

GO FORTH!

Finally, as perhaps the most exciting option for advanced groups – don't worry about it as a GM. Give the heroes access to the infinite worlds, then sit back and have them make their *own* adventures. If the universe is dynamic and the descriptions are evocative, they'll find their own reasons to have adventures. Have them lead the way, and hold on tight.

ABOUT THE EDITOR

Steven Marsh is a freelance writer and editor. He has contributed to roleplaying game releases from Green Ronin, West End Games, White Wolf, Hogshead Publishing, and others. He has been editing *Pyramid* for over 10 years; during that time he has won four Origins awards. He lives in Indiana with his wife, Nikola Vrtis, and their son.

Crossworld Conundrum

A good foundation for an *Infinite Worlds* mystery was laid within the pages of this very magazine a few months ago: *Pyramid* #3/16-18 – the exploration trilogy – contained overviews of a series of linked worlds that pointed to a larger mystery. These four worlds – named Pele-1 through Pele-4 – seem to be echoes of each other, in alternate periods of a single timeline. The ultimate answers behind the conundrums of these worlds could prove concerning to the Infinity Patrol. (It should be noted that the ultimate answers are not actually spelled out in that series of articles, although several excellent possibilities are provided for GMs.)

ODDS AND ENDS

WASTELAND BANDITS

by Stephen Dedman

A standard fixture of post-holocaust scenarios (such as those in *More Hell Parallels*, pp. 29-35) is the wasteland bandit, wearing a patchwork of improvised armor and carrying equally mismatched weapons. With a little tweaking (replacing Driving with Riding, Guns with Crossbow, etc.), the following stats can be used for marauders in any TL4+ hell parallel.

ST 11 [10]; **DX** 10 [0]; **IQ** 10 [0]; **HT** 10 [0].

Damage 1d-1/1d+1; BL 24 lbs.; HP 11 [0]; Will 10 [0]; Per 10 [0]; FP 10 [0].

Basic Speed 5.00 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0]; Dodge 8; Parry 8 (Axe/Mace or Knife).
5'-6'2"; 100-200 lbs.

MURPHY'S RULES

BY GREG HYLAND



IN *DOCTOR WHO: ADVENTURES IN TIME AND SPACE* (Cubicle 7), CLIMBING A SKYSCRAPER IN THE RAIN IS AS DIFFICULT AS CLOSING A RIFT IN TIME USING A CHOCOLATE BAR!

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0807

Got a Murphy's Rule of your own? Send it to murphy@sjgames.com

Advantages

High Pain Threshold [10]; Night Vision 2 [2]; Temperature Tolerance 1 [1].

Disadvantages

Code of Honor (Pirate's) [-5]. • A further 25 points chosen from among Bad Temper [-10*], Berserk [-10*], Bloodlust [-10*], Bully [-10*], Gluttony [-5*], Greed [-15*], or Sadism [-15*].

Skills

Area Knowledge (Own Territory) (E) IQ [1]-19; Armoury/TL8 (Melee Weapons or Small Arms) (A) IQ-1 [1]-9; Brawling (E) DX+1 [2]-11; Carousing (E) HT+1 [2]-11; Driving/TL8 (Car) (A) DX [2]-10; Guns/TL8 (Pistol, Rifle, or Shotgun) (E) DX+1 [2]-11; Melee Weapon (Axe/Mace or Knife) (A) DX+1 [4]-11; Observation (A) Per [2]-10; Running (A) HT [2]-10; Scrounging (E) Per+1 [2]-11; Stealth (A) DX [2]-10; Streetwise (A) IQ [2]-10; Survival (Terrain of Own Territory) (A) Per+1 [4]-11. • *Either* Axe/Mace (A) DX+1 [4]-11 or Knife (E) DX+2 [4]-12.

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

Equipment

A bandit has a knife or hatchet; a firearm; assorted bullets (also used for barter and gambling) and whatever kind of armor he can scrounge (typically, a cloth hat, leather jacket, boots, and sunglasses or goggles). If desired, roll 2d+TL on the table to get a randomly generated set of armor. The GM may need to adjust the result depending on the TL of the world.

Total	Result
2-5	No hat; regular clothing; shoes, boots, or sandals.
6	Cloth hat or cap; fur vest; shoes.
7	Cloth hat or cap; cloth armor (heavy vest); shoes.
8	Cloth hat or cap; leather jacket; shoes.
9	Leather cap; leather jacket; boots.
10	Leather helm; leather jacket; boots.
11	Leather cap; buff coat; boots; sunglasses.
12	Leather cap; leather jacket; reinforced boots; goggles.
13+	Leather helm; flak jacket or tactical vest; reinforced boots; goggles.

Customization Notes

Some bandits might have one of these optional mutations Roll 3d to find out which one.

Roll	Result
3-4	Missing Digit [-2 or -5]
5-6	Infravision [0]
7-8	Peripheral Vision [15]
9-10	Fur (DR 1) or Scales or Hide (DR 2 or 3) [5, 10, or 15]
11-13	Gigantism [0]
14-18	Unnatural Feature [-1]

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

GURPS rules and statistics in this magazine are specifically for the *GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition*. Page references that begin with B refer to that book.

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