


PYRAMID[®]



Issue 3/56 June '13

PREHISTORY

CAVEMAN FUNDAMENTALS

by Michele Armellini

CAVERNS OF
THE CHRONOMANCER
by David L. Pulver

THE OLD WAYS
by Christopher R. Rice

FIRST AND FOREMOST
by Jason "PK" Levine

PAST PRESENTS
AND FUTURE
by Matt Riggsby

WHERE THE SNOW BLEEDS
by J. Edward Tremlett

PREHISTORIC PLOTS
by Megan McDonald

STEVE JACKSON GAMES

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Face the challenges of the Stone Age.

IN THIS ISSUE

Are you experiencing the dawn of time firsthand, facing savages on unfamiliar worlds, or enduring a mad scientist's Devolution Ray? Then it's time to *bone up* on prehistory!

The best place to start is with the people. Become familiar with typical prehistoric folks in *Caveman Fundamentals*. Written by Michele Armellini – author of several **GURPS WWII** supplements – it includes a new **GURPS** racial template, six new templates for typical TL0 roles, and a new Talent.

Your tribe is ready; it is time to meet the neighbors. Take offerings. Expanding greatly on **GURPS Low-Tech Companion 1: Philosophers and Kings** by that supplement's co-author Matt Riggsby, *Past Presents and Future* provides everything you need to bring gifting economies to your game: game mechanics, adventure seeds, and tips for how to add gifting to other genres.

Time-travel research gone awry? What a perfect foundation for a **GURPS Dungeon Fantasy** adventure! Discover who's living in the *Caverns of the Chronomancer* now (and what they're doing with those sheep) in this month's Eidetic Memory by **GURPS Basic Set** co-designer David L. Pulver. In addition to encounters featuring a handful of new monsters, it includes a full-color map and two play-aid versions for players.

What new secretive terror has disrupted the annual spring gathering? Take your people to *Where the Snow Bleeds*. This **GURPS** adventure outline – suitable for cavemen or those who might aid them – will let you save human history *before* it gets started!

Find more ideas for the earliest adventuring possibilities with *Prehistoric Plots*. It includes a dozen systemless suggestions for adventures before the dawn of civilization.

The Ritual Path magic system from **GURPS Monster Hunters** is a perfect fit for primitive and ultra-low-tech settings. Discover *The Old Ways* with 29 new spells, rules for transferring charms and creating tattoos, a chart for naming exotic plants, and more.

"I invented fire; you probably haven't heard of it." Learn how to gain skills that no one in the history of humanity has ever known – and became the world's first hipsters in the process! *First and Foremost*, an Appendix Z from **GURPS** Assistant Line Editor Jason "PK" Levine, shows you how.

This month's Random Thought Table looks at the joys of knowing the ending, Odds and Ends ponders "modern" stone-age antics, and everyone loses track in Murphy's Rules. Don't look for fun in one of those "man caves"; this month's *Pyramid* is the real deal!

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.)

Green: Columnist

Dark Blue: **GURPS** Features

Purple: Systemless Features

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FROM THE EDITOR

WHAT DOES IT MEAN . . .

. . . to be human?

Games dabbling in prehistory can get at the heart of that question easier than other genres – at least, when defining some aspects of humanity. Strip away our tech, our social constructs, our deep-dish personal pan pizzas, and you have the specters that have been with us since the before the dawn of civilization. For good or ill, shadows of our primal selves echo to our modern selves, as witnessed in our politics, our interpersonal relationships, and our sporting events.

The thrill of discovering something that feels like it's never been done before. The relief that comes from sating a gnawing hunger through your own efforts and prowess. The inner desire to *create*. The hunger to *destroy*. The terror of not comprehending what lurks beyond the periphery of darkness, your mind racing to come up with an explanation that satisfies your overactive mind. These thoughts – though less distinct than when the world was younger – separate us from the rabbits and wolves that live solely by instinct. The seeds for our own elevation are there from our beginnings . . . as are the sparks for our own destruction.

Going further back, when the world was lush and strange creatures roamed the Earth, our questions change.

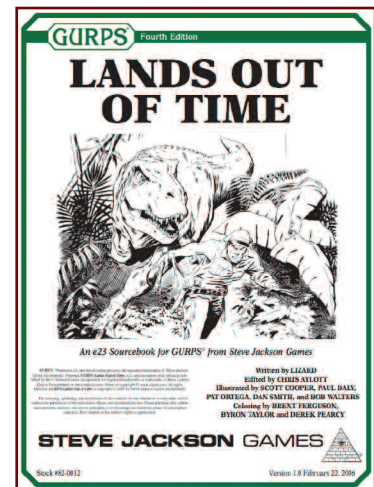
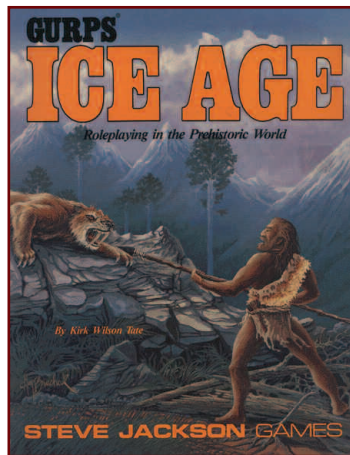
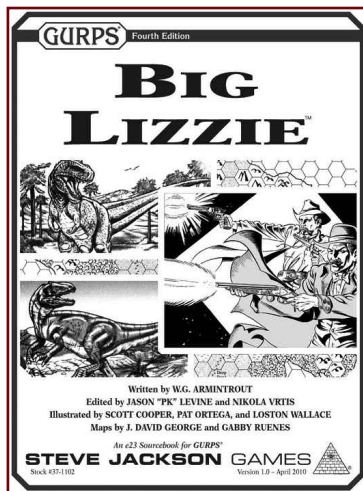
What does it mean to be a Terran?

This alien world – teeming with dinosaurs and a million other extinct creatures, its flora and fauna as deadly and strange as its surrounding terrain – resonates with us today. Dangerous, unforgiving, and scaled in impossible ways . . . who needs planets of fiction? We are all of us from a strange and inhospitable planet, carried by a generational ship that is also our destination.

Prehistory is *our* history. We revel in its excitement, and we forget it at our peril.

WRITE HERE, WRITE NOW

Why did our cavemen forbearers develop a scribed method of conveying information in iconic form? So you could write us about your *Pyramid* thoughts! Send us private feedback and insight to pyramid@sjgames.com, or join public the discussion online at forums.sjgames.com. It's so easy, even cavemen could do it!



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CAVEMAN FUNDAMENTALS

BY MICHELE ARMELLINI

Hunting, killing prey, eating its liver on the spot, and bringing much-needed food to your kin. Fighting to defend them from dangerous predators. Using your wits and skills to triumph over a wild, unforgiving environment. Making with your own hands everything you and your family will ever

need. Snuggling by the fire with friends, dancing around it, re-enacting that arduous hunt, telling mighty tales. Making sure your own band thrives.

Now you can roleplay those perilous times with these caveman templates.

ASSUMPTIONS

The Stone Age lasted millions of years! Things must have changed along the way. Although it would be possible, albeit challenging, to roleplay early hominids – with grunts for a language, rocks for weapons, and sticks for tools – the templates provided here are suitable for *Homo sapiens sapiens* characters, not terribly different from present-day humans, if somewhat stocky and hairy. Their time is the Mesolithic, around 8,500 years B.C., so that they have a wider range of technologies and skills available, as well as a bit more complex social interactions. Their tech level and how certain skills function at TL0 are described in *GURPS Low-Tech*; for more information about their society, see *GURPS Low-Tech Companion 1: Philosophers and Kings* (p. 4). It should be noted that by this time, huts, tents, and even semi-permanent dwellings were a possible alternative to caves.

If the GM prefers a coastal civilization, he'll need to tinker with the templates. These templates take into account minor body of waters as sources of food by offering Fishing as a skill, but not Boating or Swimming. Likewise, adaptations to specific environments might mean other skills have to be added –

Blowpipe and Poisons, for instance, or Thrown Weapon (Harpoon) and Teamster (Dogs).

GIFTING AND TABOOS

It is possible that a *gifting* economy is used both within the band and in intermittent contacts with other, similar groups (see *Low-Tech Companion 1*, p. 5, and *Past Presents and Future*, pp. 9-11). Debts and Favors are a way to represent standing obligations under that system, and Compulsive Generosity is typical of key figures in such an economy.

The cavemen's religion is far from a painstakingly organized theology, but it certainly features many taboos. This is why Vows are always an option in the templates.

Get adventure ideas in *Where the Snow Bleeds* (pp. 21-25) and *Prehistoric Plots* (pp. 26-28).

THE BASIC TEMPLATE

This racial template is an ideal starting point for creating interesting people in prehistoric settings. The disadvantages included in this template do not count toward the campaign limit (see p. B11).

CAVEMAN

-5 points

Every day, you have to gather wood for the fire, find and fix food, and make or repair tools. No "professionals" will do these

things for you; there are no professionals at all, not when your society is some 30-50 persons including children! Knowing your turf intimately and walking long distances are facts of life. So, you have learned basic skills from an early age, giving you a natural talent with those skills. It is possible to lack one (or more) of them – the GM may even let you gain disadvantages that offset some of the bonus – but only if you have a good explanation. However, this has social repercussions; the band dislikes inept slackers, so you might end up with a Social Stigma or a bad Reputation.

You must count on your fingers, because you have no names for numbers; however, this doesn't mean you have no idea of the value of things. You have a Duty, because even the least important member can occasionally be called upon to risk his own life for the good of the band. Finally, your language has no written form.

Disadvantages: Duty (Band; 6 or less) [-2]; Innumerate [-5]; Language (Native tongue at Native/None) [-3].

Racial Skills: Area Knowledge (Local or Regional) (E) IQ [1]-10; Hiking (A) HT-1 [1]-9; Scrounging (E) Per [1]-10; and Survival (any) (A) Per [2]-10.

PROFICIENCY TEMPLATES

Division of labor has not been conceived of yet. Still, some persons are better than others at certain tasks. The group often acknowledges this, in ways represented by Social Regard and Reputation. Although a typical caveman could be built with just the racial template, these role templates suggest ways individual groups members could be extraordinary.

Sex plays a role in the choice, but it's not decisive. Men are more suitable for killing big prey, while a woman can find food close to the camp while caring for a baby. However, some women might be proficient at small game and fishing, and some groups might require lame or old men to pick mushrooms and berries. Furthermore, if the region is poor in game, but rich in food-bearing plants, it's not a given that the band leader will be a hunter! If those providing most of the food supply are the gatherers, then they'll be the ones deciding when to migrate and where to encamp.

GATHERER

30 points

You are better than most at finding, identifying and picking plant food in the wild. You also look for eggs, nestlings, insects, and so on. You also know how to treat inedible or even poisonous yields to turn them into acceptable food.

You might round this out by laying traps for small animals, hunting lesser game, or fishing. Alternatively, you could spend more time near the encampment, gathering firewood, preparing food, caring for the band's children, and doing other chores.

Attributes: ST 10 [0]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 11 [20]; HT 10 [0].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 11 [0]; Per 11 [0]; FP 10 [0]; Basic Speed 5.00 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

Advantages: Caveman [-5]. • 10 points chosen from among Per +1 [5/level], FP +1 [3/level], Absolute Direction [5], Acute Taste and Smell [2/level], Favor [Varies], Fit [5], Plant Empathy [5], Reputation +1 (Successful gatherer; Band; All the time) [5], or Survivor 1-2 [5/level]†.

Disadvantages: -10 points chosen from among Chummy [-5], Curious [-5*], Debt [-1/level], Dependents [Varies], Gluttony [-5*], Sense of Duty (Band) [-5], Skinny [-5], Stubbornness [-5], Truthfulness [-5*], or Vow [-5].

Primary Skills: Area Knowledge (Local or Regional) (E) IQ+1 [1]-12‡ and Survival (any) (A) Per+2 [6]-13‡.

Secondary Skills: Naturalist (Earth) (H) IQ-1 [2]-10 and Weather Sense (A) IQ-1 [1]-10. • One of these two packages:

1. 2 points chosen from among Navigation/TL0 (Land) or Traps/TL0, both (A) IQ-1 [1]-10, or Fishing (E) Per [1]-11.

2. 2 points chosen from among Leatherworking or Sewing/TL0 both (E) DX [1]-10; Housekeeping (E) IQ [1]-11; Professional Skill (Midwife)/TL0 or Teaching, both (A) IQ-1 [1]-10.

Background Skills: Three of Climbing (A) DX-1 [1]-9; First-Aid/TL0 (E) IQ [1]-11 or Pharmacy (Herbal) (H) IQ-2 [1]-9; Hiking (A) HT [1]-10‡; Knot-Tying (E) DX [1]-10; Scrounging (E) Per+1 [1]-12‡; Stealth (A) DX-1 [1]-9; any secondary skill not chosen above; or any skill listed in the hunter (below) or craftsman (p. 6) templates.

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

† See **GURPS Power-Ups 2: Talents**.

‡ Raised from default from Caveman.

Anachronistic Skill Names

Some of the skills might raise eyebrows, because their names *sound* too modern. And players might find it funny that somebody living in a cave has Housekeeping! A careful reading of the skill descriptions shows that indeed they are applicable at TL0 in some form. Moreover, actual archaeology and ethnography support that conclusion.

An easy solution is provided by the example of the Meteorology skill, which is canonically called Weather Sense at TL0 (see p. B209). As long as the GM keeps track of the original names, he can alter them as he wishes. Thus, the characters have "Cave-keeping". . . which is even more important than it sounds, because at TL0, it's the go-to skill for preserving food (see **GURPS Low-Tech Companion 3: Daily Life and Economics**, p. 13). Finance could be called "Counting Favors," Machinist/TL0 may be described as "Stone Knapping," and so on.

HUNTER

65 points

You are particularly adept at tracking, pursuing, and killing game, including large and dangerous animals. You can close in without alerting your quarry, and you are competent with several weapons. You have mastered all the ruses, and you know the band's hunting ranges.

Attributes: ST 11 [10]; DX 11 [20]; IQ 10 [0]; HT 11 [10].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-1/1d+1; BL 24 lbs.; HP 11 [0]; Will 10 [0]; Per 11 [5]; FP 11 [0]; Basic Speed 5.50 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

You want to be a leader, Broud, but a man who hits his people can never lead the clan.

– Brun, in *The Clan of the Cave Bear*

Advantages: Caveman [-5]. ● 10 points chosen from among ST +1 [10], Per +1 [5/level], FP +1 [3/level], Absolute Direction [5], Acute Hearing [2/level], Acute Taste and Smell [2/level], Acute Vision [2/level], Favor [Varies], Fearlessness [2/level], Fit [5], High Pain Threshold [10], Outdoorsman 1 [10], Rapid Healing [5], Reputation +1 (Successful Hunter; Band; All the time) [5], or Stalker 1-2 [5/level]†.

Disadvantages: -15 points chosen from among Bad Smell [-10], Curious [-5*], Debt [-1/level], Dependents [Varies], Gluttony [-5*], Loner [-5*], Overconfidence [-5*], Sense of Duty (Band) [-5], Stubbornness [-5], Vow [-5], or Workaholic [-5].

Primary Skills: Survival (any) (A) Per+1 [2]-12‡ and Tracking (A) Per+1 [4]-12. ● One of Thrown Weapon (Spear or Stick) (E) DX+2 [4]-13; Axe/Mace, Bolas, Bow, Spear, or Spear Thrower, all (A) DX+1 [4]-12; or Sling (H) DX [4]-11.

Secondary Skills: Area Knowledge (Local or Regional) (E) IQ+1 [1]-11‡; Navigation/TL0 (Land) (A) IQ [2]-10; and Stealth (A) DX [2]-11. ● Either 2 points in any one weapon skill not already chosen or Traps/TL0 (A) IQ [2]-10.

Background Skills: Three of Climbing or Professional Skill (Butcher), both (A) DX-1 [1]-10; First-Aid/TL0 (E) IQ [1]-10; Animal Handling (Dogs), Disguise/TL0 (Animals), or Weather Sense, all (A) IQ-1 [1]-9; Mimicry (Animal Sounds or Bird Calls) (H) IQ-2 [1]-8; Hiking (A) HT [1]-11‡; Running (A) HT-1 [1]-10; any one weapon skill not already chosen; or any skill listed in the gatherer (p. 5) or craftsman (below) templates.

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

† See *GURPS Power-Ups 2: Talents*.

‡ Raised from default from Caveman.

CRAFTSMAN

55 points

You are especially good at making and repairing things. You devise and create most of the objects your civilization

New Talent

This Talent works like Artificer (see p. B90), but offers a bonus in a slightly different and shorter list of skills, given that it's suitable for TL0 characters. It has a correspondingly lower point cost.

Craftsman

5 points/level

Armoury, Artist, Carpentry, Leatherworking, Machinist, and Professional Skill (Tanner).

Reaction bonus: anyone for whom you do work.

relies on, using stone, bone, wood, pelts, clay, and fibers. Your time spent crafting weapons and tools for your kin allows the hunters and gatherers more time to find food. It's possible you are lame or older than many in the band.

Attributes: ST 10 [0]; DX 11 [20]; IQ 11 [20]; HT 10 [0].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 11 [0]; Per 11 [0]; FP 10 [0]; Basic Speed 5.25 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

Advantages: Caveman [-5]. ● 10 points chosen from among ST +1 [10], Will +1 to +2 [5/level], Craftsman 1-2 [5/level], Favor [Varies], High Manual Dexterity 1-2 [5/level], Reputation +1 (Successful craftsman or Tribal elder; Band; All the time) [5], Signature Gear [Varies], Single-Minded [5], Social Regard 1 (Respected) [5], or Versatile [5].

Disadvantages: -15 points chosen from among HT -1 [-10], Basic Move -1 to -2 [-5/level], Bad Smell [-10], Debt [-1/level], Dependents [Varies], Gluttony [-5*], Lame (Crippled Legs) [-10]; Phobia [Varies], Shyness [-5], Sense of Duty (Band) [-5], Skinny [-5], Stubbornness [-5], Vow [-5], or Workaholic [-5].

Primary Skills: Machinist/TL0 (A) IQ+1 [4]-12. ● One of Carpentry (E) IQ+2 [4]-13; or Armoury/TL0 (Melee Weapons or Missile Weapons) or Professional Skill (Tanner), both (A) IQ+1 [4]-12.

Secondary Skills: One of these two packages:

1. If Armoury/TL0 was not taken as a primary skill, above, then Armoury/TL0 (Melee Weapons or Missile Weapons) (A) IQ [2]-11. ● 3 points chosen from among the options of package 2, below.
2. If Armoury/TL0 was taken as a primary skill, 5 points chosen from among Leatherworking (E) DX [1]-11; Professional Skill (Clothmaker) (A) DX [2]-11; Merchant (A) IQ-1 [1]-10; Artist (Body Art, Drawing, Pottery, Sculpting or Woodworking) (H) IQ-1 [2]-10; or any one primary skill not already chosen.

Background Skills: 2 points chosen from among Scrounging (E) Per+1 [1]-12‡; any skill not chosen above; or any skill listed in the gatherer (p. 5) or hunter (pp. 5-6) templates.

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

† Raised from default from Caveman.

LEADER

60 points

You are better than most at considering options, making decisions, and convincing your band to follow you. You have no formal Status, but most people are aware that you are wise, so you can lead them by consensus.

You have mastered various systems for applying your personal influence, you are usually well-liked, and you may be the center of a web of mutual favors. Unlike a later-TL nobleman, you can't be a megalomaniac or a bully; you wouldn't be highly regarded by your band, and you need their support to remain their leader.

Attributes: ST 10 [0]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 12 [40]; HT 10 [0].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 12 [0]; Per 12 [0]; FP 10 [0]; Basic Speed 5.00 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

Advantages: Caveman [-5]. • 20 points chosen from among ST +1 [10], DX +1 [20], Will +1 to +2 [5/level], Allies [varies], Charisma 1-2 [5/level], Common Sense [10], Eidetic Memory [5], Favor [Varies], Intuition [15], Luck [15], Outdoorsman 1 [10], Reputation +1 to +3 (Wise elder; Band; All the time) [5/level], Sensitive [5], Signature Gear [Varies], Smooth Operator 1 [15], Social Regard (Respected) 1 [5], Talker 1-2 [5/level]†, Versatile [5], Voice [10], or Wealth (Comfortable) [10].

Disadvantages: -20 points chosen from among Compulsive Generosity [-5*], Chummy [-5], Debt [-1/level], Dependents [Varies], Gluttony [-5*], Greed [-15*], Guilt Complex [-5], Lecherousness [-15*], Obsession [-5*], Selfless [-5*], Sense of Duty (Band) [-5], Vow [-5], or Workaholic [-5].

Primary Skills: 4 points in any combination of weapon skills.

• Two of Leadership or Public Speaking, both (A) IQ+1 [4]-13; or Diplomacy (H) IQ [4]-12.

Secondary Skills: 4 points chosen from among Current Affairs/TL0 (Regional) or Gesture, both (E) IQ [1]-12; Acting, Fast-Talk, Intimidation, Merchant, or Politics, all (A) IQ [2]-12; Performance (A) IQ-1 [1]-11; or Finance, Religious Ritual (Band's religion), or Tactics, all (H) IQ-1 [2]-11. • 4 points chosen from among Area Knowledge (Local or Regional) (E) IQ+1 [1]-13†; or any primary skills of the gatherer (p. 5), hunter (pp. 5-6), or craftsman (p. 6) templates.

Background Skills: 5 points chosen from among Scrounging (E) Per+1 [1]-13†; or any skill not chosen above; or any skill listed in the gatherer, hunter, or craftsman templates.

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

† See *GURPS Power-Ups 2: Talents*.

‡ Raised from default from Caveman.

SHAMAN

70 points

The spirits that animate everything in the world smile upon you, so that you are the middleman between your band and those powerful, inscrutable beings. You can contact them, negotiate with them, curry their favor, and even have them help you – provided you play by their rules. You lead the religious and maybe social rituals of the band, offer supernatural advice when decisions are to be taken, heal the ailing, and take care of the spirits of the dead.

Even though you are the closest thing to a priest that the band has, you are no cleric, and there is no organized religion. This also means your clout comes from what you can actually achieve, or from how convincing you can be!

Attributes: ST 10 [0]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 12 [40]; HT 10 [0].

Shamans

At TL0, a lucky band will have a member who acts, at least on a part-time basis, as the go-between with the supernatural powers that permeate everything. The shaman template provided here is built on a few assumptions: Supernatural things do exist. These holy men are granted power by the spirits. They use Ritual Magic (see p. B242), and always cast their spells through ceremonies (see p. B237). Finally, it is recommended that shamans use custom-made Path magic (see *Thaumatology*, p. 122). The most likely Paths are Communication and Empathy, Gate, Healing, and Necromancy. A complete treatment of shamanism is found in *GURPS Thaumatology*. For detailed descriptions and stats of spirits, see *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 9: Summoners*.

Alternatively, treat these abilities as a power (see *Thaumatology*, p. 207).

For a no-mana world, the GM will have to adjust the template by removing the points for spells and for all supernatural traits. The mundane lens suggests one method for doing this.

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 12 [0]; Per 12 [0]; FP 10 [0]; Basic Speed 5.00 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

Advantages: Caveman [-5]. • Power Investiture 1 [10], and 15 points chosen from among Will +1 [5], Allies [varies], Blessed [10], Channeling [10], Charisma 1 [5], Close to Nature 1-2 [5/level]‡, Favor [Varies], Indomitable [15], Medium [10], Oracle [15], Reputation +1 to +3 (Shaman; Band; All the time) [5/level], Sensitive [5], Single-Minded [5], Social Regard (Respected or Feared) 1 [5], Spirit Empathy [10], Spirit-Talker 1-2 [5/level]‡, Talker 1 [5]‡, Wealth (Comfortable) [10], or increase Power Investiture one level [10].

Disadvantages: -10 points chosen from among Disciplines of Faith (Mysticism or Ritualism) [Varies], Vow [Varies], or Delusion [Varies]. • -20 points chosen from among ST -1 [-10], Absent-Mindedness [-15], Addiction (Hallucinogens) [-15], Charitable [-15*], Compulsive Behavior [Varies], Curious [-5*], Loner [-5*], Nightmares [-5*], Sense of Duty (Band) [-5], Split Personality [-15*], or further Vows [Varies].

Primary Skills: Public Speaking (A) IQ [2]-12; Religious Ritual (Band's religion) (H) IQ [4]-12; and Ritual Magic (Shamanism) (VH) IQ [8]-12.

Secondary Skills: Acting (A) IQ [2]-12 and Hidden Lore (Spirits) (A) IQ-1 [1]-11. • One of the following packages:

1. *Spirit-Talker*: 5 points chosen from among Naturalist (IQ/H); Dreaming, Exorcism, or Meditation, all (Will/H); or an increase in Hidden Lore (Spirits) (IQ/A).
2. *Medicine Man*: 5 points chosen from among First Aid/TL0 (IQ/E); Pharmacy/TL0 (Herbal) or Naturalist, both (IQ/H); Herb Lore/TL0 (IQ/VH); Exorcism (Will/H); or Esoteric Medicine (Per/H).
3. *Mundane Spiritual Leader*: 5 points chosen from among Dancing (DX/A); Fast-Talk, Fortune Telling (any), or Teaching, all (IQ/A); Artist (Body Art or Drawing), Diplomacy, Mimicry (any), Musical Instrument (any), or Ventriloquism, all (IQ/H); Singing (HT/E); Intimidation (Will/A); or an increase in Acting (IQ/A) or in Religious Ritual (Shamanism) (IQ/H).

Background Skills: 4 points chosen from among Weather Sense (A) IQ [1]-12; any skill not chosen above; or any skill in any other template.

Spells: 14 points chosen from among appropriate survival- and spirit-focused Paths and spells, which will be either (H) IQ+1 [1]-13 or (VH) IQ [1]-12, including +1 from Power Investiture.

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

† See *GURPS Power-Ups 2: Talents*.

Lens

Mundane Shaman (-24 points): In a world with no magic, remove Ritual Magic and replace its 8 points with mundane skills chosen from among the secondary ones; also remove Power Investiture 1 and the spells, without replacing them. Channeling, Medium, Oracle, Spirit Empathy, and Spirit-Talker may be inappropriate, depending on the specifics of the setting's supernatural beings. Package 3 is recommended, together with some skills of package 2.

STORYTELLER

30 points

You are the best when it comes to telling tales, reenacting hunts, singing, and generally having a good time around the fire in the evening. You are probably the best teacher for the band's children and the one most likely to know and remember events in the past and present. That may be because you are older than others, or just because you're good at it.

You can't make a living out of this. You also perform some hunter, gatherer, or craftsman tasks.

Attributes: ST 10 [10]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 11 [20]; HT 10 [0].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 11 [0]; Per 11 [0]; FP 10 [0]; Basic Speed 5.00 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

Advantages: Caveman [-5]. • 10 points chosen from among Per +1 [5], Acute Hearing [2/level], Born Entertainer 1 [5]†, Charisma 1 [5], Eidetic Memory [5], Favor [Varies], Reputation +1 (Entertaining storyteller or Knowledgeable elder; Band; All the time) [5], Sensitive [5], Talker 1 [5]†, or Voice [10].

Disadvantages: -15 points chosen from among HT -1 [-10], Compulsive Carousing [-5*], Curious [-5*], Debt [-1/level], Dependents [Varies], Gluttony [-5*], Impulsiveness [-10*], Overconfidence [-5*], Sense of Duty (Band) [-5], or Vow [-5].

Primary Skills‡: 7 points chosen from among Performance or Public Speaking, both (IQ/A).

Secondary Skills: Literature (Oral Traditions) (H) IQ-1 [2]-10.

• 5 points chosen from among Dancing (A) DX+1 [4]-11; Current Affairs/TL0 (Regional), Games (any), or Gesture, all (E) IQ [1]-11; Acting, Poetry, or Teaching, all (A) IQ [2]-11; Musical Instrument (any) or Religious Ritual, both (H) IQ-1 [2]-10; or Singing (E) HT+1 [2]-11.

Background Skills: 3 points chosen from among Acrobatics (H) DX-2 [1]-8; Artist (any) (H) IQ-2 [1]-9; Carousing (A) HT-1 [1]-9; Diplomacy, (H) IQ-2 [1]-9; Disguise/TL0 (Animals) (A) IQ-1 [1]-10; Makeup/TL0 (E) IQ [1]-11; or any secondary skill not chosen above. • 3 points chosen from among any skills listed in the gatherer (p. 5), hunter (pp. 5-6), or craftsman (p. 6) templates.

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

† See *GURPS Power-Ups 2: Talents*.

‡ The two primary skills default to each other, and with seven points it is possible to have them both at the same level.

SUGGESTED READING

GURPS Ice Age for *GURPS Third Edition* was used as a key reference for these templates, and it's a great source of additional suggestions for various primitive cultures.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Michele Armellini lives in Udine, Italy, with his very understanding wife, Silvia. He makes a living out of foreign languages, but he loves dabbling with and studying the obscure and the uncanny – and trying to convert them into game mechanics! Apart from things he has published in Italian, he has written for *Pyramid*, and he is the author of *GURPS WWII: Grim Legions*. He is also the author or co-author (with Hans-Christian Vortisch) of several other e23 products: *GURPS WWII: Their Finest Hour*, *GURPS WWII: Doomed White Eagle*, and *GURPS WWII: Michael's Army*.

This is a story from long ago, when the great mammoths still roamed our lands. It's the story of my two brothers and me. When the three of us were young, we were taught that the world is full of magic.

*– Denahi, in **Brother Bear***

PAST PRESENTS AND FUTURE

BY MATT RIGGSBY

Before the invention of money provided a yardstick and universal currency for exchange, economies frequently worked on a more obviously personal basis. Though barter was used, where complete strangers traded goods on the spur of the moment and did not have anything to do with one another again, people in closer relationships often turned to gifting.

In a gift economy, participants exchange goods by giving them away to people they have or hope to establish relationships with. These gifts, presented as acts of generosity, create a social obligation for the recipient to provide a gift in return, usually at some later date.

On a practical level, a system of creating debts without urgent deadlines for repayment helps build social insurance. If your goat dies, for example, it's good to be in a situation where your neighbor is already inclined to give you a new one. In a more abstract sense, gifting is a powerful tool for making and maintaining social networks. Giving a gift creates the perception that the giver is kind and generous enough to provide the gift, and that the recipient is held in sufficient esteem to be given something. Ideally, everyone involved has their material needs met *and* ends up held highly regarded by their friends and neighbors.

At the upper end of gifting economies, the material needs become secondary. High-prestige exchanges are purely about the esteem in which the items being exchanged are held, and the prestige the exchanges give the giver and the recipient. They frequently involve goods that are purely decorative, such as the shell armbands and necklaces traded in the Trobriand Islands, or the huge stone disks (sometimes misleadingly called coins by outsiders) that are used as monumental displays in the Yap Islands.

In practice, naturally, things are much more complicated. Far from being a perpetual string of Christmases with the family, gifting economies can be as contentious and fraught with whining and resentment as . . . well, a string of Christmases with the family. Participants in exchanges pester one another for more or larger gifts, berate each other for stinginess, and are sometimes stiffed if they create obligations that can't be fulfilled. And all of that has gaming applications.

HOW TO GIVE, OR NOT

Ideally, gifts have several characteristics that separate them from commodities exchanged either by barter or for cash:

Gift exchanges take place over time. That is, when a gift is given, a return gift can be offered at another time, not immediately. Exchanges take place between people establishing or maintaining a relationship (as opposed to commodity exchanges, which take place between people with no ongoing relationship).

Gifts belong to spheres of exchange. Items are divided into sets, where it is socially acceptable to exchange goods within a set (for example, foods for other foods, tools for other tools, spouses and jewelry for one another), but not between them.

Timing depends on many factors. Gifts may be presented with more fanfare at auspicious occasions such as birthdays and weddings where one person or another is the clear focus of an event. The recipient may present a return gift at the next birthday or other such event, even if it takes a long time. Meanwhile, harvest feasts, solstices, and similarly impersonal events may provide opportunities for delayed as well as simultaneous gift exchanges. Such events may also outline a ritual calendar for important exchanges, with someone who is unable to assemble a sufficient gift in time losing prestige.

Looseness in timing creates reasons for resentment and conflict. Participants in an exchange may have different personal thresholds for how long is too long to wait for a return gift, leading to increased friction as the one expecting a gift pesters the other to give it to him.

Previous Discussion

GURPS Low-Tech Companion 1: Philosophers and Kings briefly discusses the idea of gifting economies. This article expands on those core ideas with fuller descriptions and a number of rules and campaign applications.

Relationships are a bit more rigid than timing, but not completely. The relationship between people in gifting economies is typically ongoing. However, people with ongoing relationships can have commodity exchanges, even in parallel with gifting relationships. That is, people who get respect and social recognition for giving one another high-prestige gifts of pigs and iron knives, with each exchange indicating an ever-closer alliance between the two parties, may also do a widely ignored but steady series of one-off trades in taro root and clay pots.

In straitened circumstances, a participant who has most recently received a gift may also decide not to give one in return, or instead to give a poor one; one participant may get stiffed so that the gifter can afford to give better gifts to other people he'd rather cultivate. This will damage the previous relationship, perhaps even end it, but gaming relationships can be part of the system.

Spheres of exchange can be particularly slippery. Most often, spheres of exchange divide goods into various gradations of status. For example, some items might be subsistence and basic utilitarian, others could be specialized or high-prestige, while other are sacred and profane items. Or they might be more subdivided. For example, three categories of no-prestige utilitarian goods; a more prestigious category of spouses, cattle, and fine cloth; and a supremely prestigious category of carved ivory and shell. Spheres may also be of parallel status but separated for other reasons. Goods might be distinguished by being "male" and "female" (this is the case in some societies in New Guinea), or associated with specific clans or age grades. Specific types of labor may be included in spheres of exchange. For example, laborers building a temple or an undertaker dealing with the bodies of the dead may require specific forms of compensation for their work. Among one group in the Sudan, beer could be presented as a gift in exchange for labor in building houses and harvesting grain, but *not* for other goods or forms of labor.

However, these spheres are not always impermeable. High-status spheres of exchange necessarily deal in goods that are particularly scarce and difficult to obtain, but if they can only be exchanged for one another, older generations will run out of people to trade with as their partners die off. Therefore, there must be ways for people to enter those spheres with other kinds of exchanges. Typically, there are limited contexts in which favored individuals can obtain high-status goods in return for low-status ones or purchase them as they would other commodities. For example, someone with a high-status item might provide it to a favored relative at a wedding, tribal initiation, or coming-of-age ceremony, or there may be ceremonial ways in which participant in an exchange can temporarily act as if unlike goods can be traded for one another.

Many gifting systems have other structural problems built into them. In some systems, there's pressure to be more generous with return gifts, since the generous are held in higher esteem. However, this creates a sort of inflationary pressure in the gifting economy, as each person tries to outdo the one before him. Eventually, one's social obligations outstrip one's ability to

accumulate wealth, leading to ever-shifting alliances and personal social regard. Gift exchanges can also, in some networks, be used to reinforce social distinctions if the people with the most prestigious goods choose only to trade with one another.

GIFTING TO WIN FRIENDS AND INFLUENCE PEOPLE

In gifting societies, beyond the purely economic concerns of getting proper utilitarian and material value for goods given, there can also be a layer of politics. To work out an exchange, participants need to deal with both the economic value of an item and their *prestige value*.

In most low-tech societies, gifts may be rated for a prestige value from +0 to +5. Most subsistence and utilitarian goods have a prestige value of +0, while large gifts can be prestigious in their own right. To find the prestige value of items with an easily calculated monetary value (for example, a herd of cattle), divide the monetary value by a typical monthly income for the society, and consult the table below. In-between results use the lower value; e.g., a quotient of 17.2 is worth +3.

Value/Monthly Income	Prestige Value
Less than 1	+0
1	+1
2	+2
5	+3
20	+4
100 or more	+5

However, in some societies, the highest prestige goods have a value partly or completely divorced from their monetary value. For example, large livestock are generally more prestigious than small animals, so someone giving a cow would garner more prestige than one giving an equivalent monetary value of fish or chickens. Huge stone disks have little or not practical value, but in the Yap Islands, they're immensely prestigious. The GM must assign prestige values according to items' aesthetics, history, or whatever criteria the society invests with sentimental value.

Even without money, participants are generally able to work out the approximate values of gifts to be given and received. Participants may use the rules for haggling in *GURPS Social Engineering* (p. 27) to come to a preliminary, if usually tacit, agreement.

Exchanges of goods with a prestige value of +0 do not necessarily require any social and political maneuvering to occur. Even so, the participants should know one another (well enough to use the *Continuing Relationships* rules on p. 39 of *Social Engineering*,) or come recommended by mutual acquaintances.

The time frame for a return gift is typically set according to cultural expectations – such as within a week or a month, or on a particular festival or other auspicious date – and may be based on such factors as the prestige of the gift and the status of the exchange participants. Furthermore, some specifics of timing and return gift are open to discussion. If the return recipient wants his gift early, he can try to talk the other exchange participant into it. This requires that he win a contest between a suitable social skill (Savoir-Faire and Carousing are common, but the GM may allow others) and the other participant's Will. Also, regardless of when the return gift is given, the participants must roll another more Contest of Skill per the haggling rules to determine the true final value of the gift.

Daenerys Targaryen: I don't want to be his Queen. I want to go home.

Viserys Targaryen: So do I. I want us both to go home, but they took it from us. So tell me, sweet sister, how do we go home?

Daenerys Targaryen: I don't know.

Viserys Targaryen: We go home with an army. With Khal Drogo's army.

– *Game of Thrones* #1.1

The participants can engage in additional rounds of haggling if either of them desires, but only the value of the return gift is affected. Haggling is skipped if the exchange involves unique artifacts. If haggling is involved, then a final Merchant roll should be made when the return gift is finally given.

When participating in exchanges of prestigious goods (that is, anything with a prestige value of +1 or greater), concerns become more political than economic. To decide to participate in such an exchange, one party must usually convince the other to do so. The one proposing the exchange must win a contest of Politics against the other party's Will. If the one proposing the exchange is of lower Status or Social Regard, the difference *times* the prestige value of the goods counts as a penalty to his Politics roll. The participants may then move on to haggling if it is suitable to the goods in question. For example, someone attempting to marry off his son may place the boy's notional value against that of a quantity of fancy cloth.

Though it can be difficult to break into the right circles, trading high-prestige goods can have an impact on the gift-giver's personal prestige. In societies where gifting is a way of garnering prestige, if a character succeeds in trading an item with a prestige value in excess of his *current* Status or Social Regard, he may roll against his Politics skill. If the roll succeeds, he increases his Social Regard by one. Only one such roll is allowed per month. Once he has attained higher Social Regard, he must participate in at least one exchange per month with items with a prestige value equal to or greater than his Social Regard to maintain it.

ADVENTURES IN GIFT-GIVING

In very low-tech societies, giving and receiving gifts is something done as a normal part of social activities, and any number of things can happen in the course of giving or receiving presents. What is "Little Red Riding Hood," after all, but the story of something that happens to someone on the way to give a gift?

One way to work gift exchanges into adventures in any setting where gifting is a significant part of the economy is to remember that everybody owes somebody else something. Likewise, everybody is owed. This may be cause for foul play. For example, someone may owe a bigger gift than he can afford, but he may realize that gifting obligations die with the ones who incur them. On the other hand, someone with valuable outstanding gifts may be able to call on the people he owes for aid in times of difficulty. After all, if something happens to him, how are they going to get gifts back?

High-prestige gift exchanges can be critical situations, where a smooth exchange full of pomp and ceremony is key to both parties retaining their prestige. Not only are society's movers and shakers involved (giving adventurers a chance to deal with a wide range of important people), but the painstaking preparations needed may give them something to do – or something to sabotage.

Though gifting economies are generally thought of as a fixture of very low-tech societies that are quickly corroded by the introduction of money, gift exchanges remain an important social activity and marker of relationships even to this day. Diplomatic envoys carried valuable gifts with them to present to foreign sovereigns into the early years of the modern era. Likewise, significant gifts such as cars and sums of

money suitable to start house-hunting are still given during major life events such as weddings and high-school or college graduations. Engagement and wedding rings show how items seen in everyday life can slip between rudimentary spheres of exchange, going from a commodity at the jeweler's store to a sentimental heirloom on someone's finger. Gift economies might also serve as a model for some kinds of exchange in certain kinds of campaigns:

Magic

Powerful magical items are well-suited to be part of a gifting economy. They are often unique or nearly so, they may acquire quirky personalities of their own as the result of tiny errors during enchantment or the side effects of encountering powerful magic while in use, their value is often beyond calculation let alone financing in a low-tech economy, and they frequently build up legends for themselves. Though some enchantment may be taboo and make an item less than worthless for gift exchanges, their prestige value can usually be derived directly from their monetary value.

Many real-world societies ascribed supernatural aspects to gift exchange. For example, someone might suffer from bad luck, fall ill, or even die if he did not provide suitable gifts in exchange for those he had received. In a fantasy world, those could easily be true. Enchanted items given as gifts carry a strange geas with them that obliges recipients to carry on with gift exchanges. If they don't, they suffer the consequences of bad luck and unexpected illness. Failure to act within "the spirit of the gift" might temporarily cause such disadvantages as Lifebane, Nightmares, Phantom Voices, Unluckiness, or – in extreme conditions – even Cursed!

The Future

At very high TLs, societies equipped with robot nanofactories and zero-point energy sources may approach something like a post-scarcity economy. When just about anybody can have just about anything they want on a whim, what remains valuable? What, if anything, will still be exchanged? Depending on the state of society leading up to that point, there may be a return to gift-based economies. However, instead of shell necklaces and iron bars, the media of exchange might be artifacts with a long pedigree, such as artworks and relics of famous people. Though this may lead to extensive philosophical discussion about identity, the society may continue to value such artifacts for their authenticity. Anyone can have a molecule-perfect replica of the Mona Lisa, but only *one* person can own the real thing. Furthermore, well-publicized exchanges of such items may be an important means of tracking the provenance of artifacts, serving as a sort of "chain of custody." In such a setting, monetary values become all but meaningless, and unique items have prestige values assigned to them rather than calculated.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Matt Riggsby traded degrees in anthropology and archaeology for a career in computer programming. He currently exchanges culinary advice with his high-prestige wife, games with his son, and has several dogs who are in a sphere of their own.

EIDETIC MEMORY

CAVERNS OF THE CHRONOMANCER

BY DAVID L. PULVER

This is a *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy* adventure is suitable for a mid-sized party of novice adventurers or a smaller party of experienced delvers. With minor changes it can also be adapted to the Yrth setting of *GURPS Banestorm*.

RAIDERS

The local lord has received disturbing reports that something or someone has been raiding farms and livestock near the hamlet of Goatwater, in a sparsely populated hilly region. Yokels have gone missing, and dogs and livestock have vanished. A party of foresters led by a local ranger disappeared after being sent to investigate. Disturbingly, a wizard, one Ilarion Ubermanthus, lives in the area. According to rumor, for the past decade or two, Ilarion has lived as a hermit in a well-furnished cave in the hills, apparently engaged in arcane magical research. For several years, he has written vague letters to old friends and mentors promising great things. Did something go wrong with one of his spells or experiments, releasing some summoned demon?

It's not clear whether Ilarion is involved in whatever is happening in the hills, or a victim of it, but the local authorities would like the adventurers to look into it. There's a reward of \$2,000 to stop whatever is attacking the villagers, but more importantly, Ilarion's cave is reputedly stocked with a lot of valuable magic items, including the mage's library of spells and wizard's staff tipped with a mighty Powerstone. If he's dead, they're free for the taking (after whatever killed him is disposed of).

ILARION'S CAVE

The innkeeper of the nearest inn on the road to Stone-dragon Hills can give them an earful.

Master Ilarion? "Everyone's heard of him – he's the most famous wizard in these parts, even if no one sees much of him. He and an apprentice or two have been living in a cave for the last 10 years or so, researching new spells or enchanting or

whatever wizards do! Some hill folk say he pops round once a year at the nearest village or the inn, often materializing out of thin air! Then, he spends some coin to buy flour, cheese, and the local cider, ogles the barmaids – he's a lusty fellow for a graybeard – picks up any mail, then vanishes again in a puff of smoke. It's said Ilarion is a cantankerous old buzzard, though, and not fond of unwanted company. I heard that the last time anyone bothered him – some fool wanting to be his next apprentice – he just pointed his finger, and the young idiot vanished from the cave entrance and reappeared in Goatwater Pond." (Anyone with magical knowledge will recognize the rarity of teleportation, and may suspect that Ilarion has access to other "impossible" Gate spells.)

Directions? "No secret. Just follow the Old King's Road west for five miles from here. You'll see some low green hills rising up north of the road, out of the mists. The one on the right's Stonedragon Hill. When you reach the first two hills, turn off the road and follow the valley between them north. Take the old goat track, and after a quarter mile or so, the track forks. If you take the northeast fork along the valley for another half mile, you'll reach the hamlet of Goatwater (population 40). Take the northwest fork, and it climbs Stone-dragon Hill. Look for a lightning-blasted tree near the summit; the cave's right there."

How'd the hill get its name? "Long time back, some local goatherds found some ancient dragon bones, hard as stone, in the caves there -- along with some old drawings on the walls of animals and hunters. Local folk say they may have belonged to the 'first men who worshipped the old gods' or were made by 'ancient wood elves.'"

GOATWATER FORD

This tiny hamlet nestled in the valley is centered on a small, dilapidated church run by a single priest. About 20 poor families farm the sparse soil and raise sheep and goats in the surrounding meadows and hillside. There's a small smithy and the village elder's house that doubles as a wanna-be tavern.

The locals are armed with spears and pitchforks, because they're afraid of whatever is stealing their livestock. The local priest, Father Bruce, says troubles started last week when some a goatherd named Rolf went missing after he went looking for some lost animals. Then Old Man Vin, a

trapper, said he heard growls and grunts in the night on the track near Stonedragon Hill, and said he saw a print like he'd never seen before – a giant claw mark! Sheep started to go missing, too. A few local foresters went to investigate, but haven't been since.

Adventure Background

Ilarion Ubermanthus is a reclusive mage who lives in a cave in the Stonedragon Hills, a wilderness region several miles outside of town. Ilarion was a master of Gate magic, and his particular interest was the study of the world's ancient past. He and an apprentice chose this particular site for his experiments because of the exotic fossils of ancient and apparently long-extinct beasts, some resembling monstrous lizards like wingless dragons, and ancient cave paintings left by peoples that once inhabited the region.

After perfecting his time-gate spell, Ilarion decided it would be interesting to seek the origins of the dragons! Early attempts at using a Time Shift spell convinced Ilarion that it was too easy to get lost, so he took the slow-and-sure approach of creating a magical gate. Ilarion first used Divination spells on fossilized bones to determine how far back in time he should cast his portals to find the "age of wingless dragons." Receiving an answer – one that seemed almost incredible – he flung a portal back millions of years into the past.

Discovering a world with a strange, hot climate filled with giant reptiles (actually dinosaurs), Ilarion was delighted. He enchanted the gate to make it permanent, and ventured into the world several times, only to stop when he was nearly killed and his apprentice slain by a monstrous bipedal lizard. He sealed the gate behind a thick iron-bound door, and continued his researches in other times.

Next, Ilarion grew interested in the question of how long these monstrous lizards had ruled the earth, and whether they were the ancestors of real dragons. To test these theories he constructed a second portal, one that led vastly further into the past. He encountered nothing there but a foul air that smelled of rotten eggs, along with frightening pools of primordial slime, some of it animate. Still, it was interesting, so he made the gate permanent so he could research it at leisure, even bringing back a few samples of these ancient slimes to compare with more modern slime monsters. He sealed the gate behind a thick door.

Still, the redoubtable enchanter did not give up his studies. The aged mage opened a third gate just last week. Deciding to see whether proto-dragons had survived into the recent past, he drew upon his power to create another magical time-gate at the site of some of the old cave paintings on the wall, and stepped back 100,000 years in time.

He found the caves still existed in an era of glacial ice. They were inhabited, not by dinosaurs or slimes, but by fur-clad savages. Skulking through the stoney passages, he heard a crude drumming and guttural chancing. Tiptoeing forward, he spied Ika-Loana, the shaman of the Bear Clan. Ilarion watched from the shadows as the savage cave-girl danced naked, clad only in body paint and a necklace of

animal teeth, ritually calling up the spirits of her ancestors to bless her clan's next hunting trip.

It had been a year since Ilarion had seen a woman, and as he watched this untamed beauty writhe in the circle of firelight, and felt the power she invoked, he became distracted by unfamiliar feelings stirring in him. Indeed, he was so entranced that he did not notice her mate, Oog the Bear-Hunter, as he crept up behind him and bashed the wizard's brains out with his great club.

So passed Ilarion the Chronomancer. But with their shaman's sacred dance interrupted, the other cavemen were concerned at the bad omen, and feared intruders might be here in their sacred caves! The shaman ordered the hunters in her tribe to follow Ilarion's tracks back, which led to a strange rectangle of softly shimmering energy in the rear of their caverns. It was next to a sacred cave painting the shaman had done last year! The rest of the tribe cowered back, but Ika-Loana decided this was a sign from the spirits; feeling that she was on the path to some great revelation, she strode through the shimmering portal. Oog and his strongest hunters, unwilling to let her face danger alone or lose their shaman, followed her (the rest of the clan remained behind.)

They cavemen found themselves in a warmer yet strangely familiar world: the caves of Ilarion. But only moments after they entered the portal, the gate suddenly vanished behind them. Ilarion had never made this gate permanent, and with the mage dead, the gate spell collapsed after its duration expired. As a result, it has left Ika-Loana and her hunters trapped in the present.

The cavemen spent time exploring the wizard's cave complex. They pried open doors, smashed chests, all in search of food and valuables. After finding and eating the wizard's strange provisions and getting drunk on his casks of wine and cider, one of the cavemen forced open the locked doors that led to the primal and dinosaur world. Their brief exploration revealed the air was bad in one and the other was full of scary monsters, so they retreated.

The cavemen ventured outside, finding the present-day world comfortably warm and disturbingly green. Their scouts found Goatwater, but the village, with its houses and odd-faced people was scary, so they retreated. They have limited themselves to killing a few rangers, shepherds, and goatherds, raiding some outlying woodcutter's hovels, and stealing goats, sheep, and chickens, taking the animals back to the caves to eat.

While they were relaxing after their latest raid, however, some dinosaurs and slimes have crept through the portals . . .

STONEDRAGON HILL

This steep hill is about half a mile wide, covered with brush and riddled with old limestone caves. A few goat tracks wind up the hill. Following one past a lightning-blasted tree reveals a cave mouth 12' wide. There's a heavy red-painted wooden frame and door on the mouth of the cave, with a lock on it, but it's been smashed open. (If someone asks, or if one of them examining it makes an IQ roll, reveal it was broken from the *inside*.)

Once the investigators are inside the caves, they'll notice the faint scent of rotting flesh, with the stench getting stronger as they get closer to dead bodies.

Map

The scale of the map is *two* yards per hex. The caverns are dark except where noted, and of rough natural stone, though there are some signs they have been widened.

Continual Light: Ilarion regularly created several of these to light his sanctum without filling it with smoke. He placed them through the cave as permanent lights. Some are white light, but he used a *Color* spell to make others red so as to preserve night vision. A few of these have gone out, but rooms marked (L) are still illuminated.

*Time and space are fragments
of the infinite for the use of finite
creatures.*

– Henri Frédéric Amiel

1. Entrance

This tunnel slopes gradually downward, running perhaps eight yards below ground before leveling out.

2. Painted Cave

On the cave wall are red and black markings: hand prints or circles or spirals, but also recognizable deer and giant elephants being hunted by stick-figure men with spears. Most designs are faded, but a few look recent.

On the floor here is the skeleton of a horse, stripped of meat. Its head is caved in. Next to it is the recent corpse of a man clad in forester-green (one of the missing rangers), his skull smashed in. He has no weapons on him.

3. Storage Cave (L)

This is a cave filled with smashed wooden barrels and pots. On the floor are splinters of wood mixed with a mess of cheese scraps, spilled milk, fish bones, bread crumbs, shards of pottery and apple cores, and smears of honey. Cloth sacks of flour have been split on the floor. On a shelf attached to one wall are open, half-spilled jars of cloves, all-spice, black pepper, and other spices, some of their contents dumped onto the table. There is about \$600 worth of spices (weighing 4 lbs.) here.

This was the wizard's pantry, raided by the cavemen on their first day here.

4. Cave of the Well (L)

There are two cavemen here (see *Caveman Hunters*, below). In the middle of this room is a 3' wide shaft. In one corner of the room is a coil of rope (30'), two tin one-gallon buckets with hinged lids, and a wooden barrel (filled with slightly brackish water). A third bucket stands in one corner, with a 2-lb. rock placed on top of the lid.

The cavemen are guarding their water source. The hole is a well Ilarion dug using earth magic. The well shaft leads down 24' into a pool of fresh, icy-cold water.

5. Wizard's Library Cave (L)

Adventurers approaching may hear grunts, and the sound of something wooden being smashed up. This cavern, illuminated by a magical light, has good ventilation (thanks to a few small (1') shafts in the ceiling. It seems to have once been furnished but now it's a mess.

In the cave are five hairy savages in skins. One of them is butchering a goat with a shortsword taken from the forester slain at the entrance. The others are building a fire in the middle of the cave. They are feeding it with the forester's longbow, some broken arrows, bed clothes, and pages ripped from a large black book. Also in the room is a smashed bookshelf, and remnants of a desk and writing papers.

Close examination of the fire will reveal they have been feeding it with tomes of occult lore. Spending five minutes poring over the few papers that remain coupled with a *Thaumatology* skill roll will identify it as a wizard's grimoire, relating to the college of Gate magic. There are perhaps 1d spells still remaining intact among the pages. The GM should choose spells from the Gate college, following the prohibitions in *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 1* (p. 20) to avoid unbalancing the campaign. (Ilarion's mastery of time and space travel should die with him, as the plot device it is.)

Caveman Hunters

These hairy, half-naked savages wear crude animal skins. They are 5' tall but quite muscular. Their heads have small chins, large jaws, sloping foreheads, and bulging beetle brows. They walk erect, are armed with big clubs, and speak a primitive grunting tribal language augmented by plenty of exaggerated gestures. (They are Neanderthals from 100,000 years or so in the past, or this world's equivalent era.)

ST: 13	HP: 13	Speed: 5.25
DX: 11	Will: 11	Move: 5
IQ: 9	Per: 10	
HT: 10	FP: 10	SM: +0
Dodge: 8	Parry: 9	DR: 0

Light Club (12): 2d crushing. Reach 1.

Spear (12): 1d+3 impaling. Reach 1-2.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Appearance (Unattractive); Bloodlust (12); DR 1 (Partial, Skull); Impulsiveness (9); Intolerance; Low TL (TL0); Sense of Duty (tribal shaman); Short Lifespan 1; Temperature Tolerance (Cold); Tribal Language (Native).

Skills: Brawling-13; Broadsword-12; Dropping-11; Gesture-10; Naturalist-9; Spear-12; Stealth-11; Survival (Mountains)-10; Throwing-11; Tracking-10; Wrestling-11.

Roam abroad in the world, and take your fill of its enjoyments before the day shall come when you must quit it for good.

– Sa'di

6. Dinosaur Gate Cave

This room was the wizard's dining room and kitchen. There is a wooden table and two stools in the center of the room, and a shelf with cooking utensils, a fireplace with an iron cauldron and a narrow (1'-wide) ventilation shaft above it. On the east side of the cave is a smashed-in iron door that leads to shimmering rectangular portal. The door was obviously heavily barred, but now it is broken.

If the explorers venture through the gate, the GM can have them find the tyrannosaur on the other side after they discover the grave mentioned below. If they do not, the GM should have the monstrous lizard come through the gate and enter the caverns.

The gate was a permanent gate created by Ilarion. It leads out to a time millions of years in the past, before these caves were formed. The gate opens into a humid forest filled with towering oaks, cypresses, and giant sequoia trees. The forest is alive with reptiles, large insects, but no sizable mammals. If they remain long enough, huge dinosaurs may be spotted moving through the trees. For dramatic effect, the adventurers may quickly encounter a herbivorous creature pursued by a tyrannosaur.

The oxygen in this world is thicker. After a few minutes, suffer a -1 IQ; roll vs. HT to avoid euphoria leading to being Overconfident. It will also dry out eyes (-1 to Vision rolls).

Fifty yards past the gate, something black and shiny can be spotted through the trees. Taking a minute to explore reveals it's a stone slab set before a giant sequoia tree. The marker reads (in whatever local tongue is used by scholars, such as Latin):

In memory of the apprentice Signy Mallorian, slain valiantly defending her master Ilarion against an armored proto-dragon as we explored this world of the dawn.

Rest in peace, loyal servant.

Under 8' of sod is a grave containing a tall skeleton clad in a ragged blue dress and leather boots. Tucked into the robe's pocket is an ivory wand tipped with a opal gem in the robe's pocket (with a 2-point Powerstone; it's worth \$1,000 for the ivory alone).

Proto-Dragon King (Tyrannosaurus)

This 39'-foot long and 15'-tall green-and-brown-scaled bipedal reptile tears at its prey with a jaw full of 6"-long fangs, or thrashes them with its long tail. The creature has only one eye, however, a relic of its battle with Ilarion a few years ago.

ST: 34	HP: 34	Speed: 7.00
DX: 14	Will: 11	Move: 17
IQ: 2	Per: 14	
HT: 13	FP: 13	SM: +5
Dodge: 10	Parry: N/A	DR: 2

Bite (13*): 3d+1 impaling. Reach C.

Tail Swipe (13*): 3d+4 crushing. Reach 1-7.

Traits: DR 4 (skull only); Fangs; One Eye; Sharp Claws; Short, Weak Arms (1/4 ST); Striker (Tail; Crushing; Cannot Parry; Long, SM+1; Limited Arc, Rear Only); Wild Animal.

Skills: Tracking-15.

* Includes -1 from One Eye.

7. Bedchamber (L)

This chamber, illuminated by a red continual light, holds a four-poster bed and thick rugs. The chamber has delighted the cave shaman, and she and her mate Oog were trying out the bed together. Oog is now resting in the bed admiring his mate, while Ika-Loana paints the walls, using her fingers and pots of ash-paste and mashed berries to draw a picture of a stick-figure Oog bashing in the head of a pointy-headed figure (the wizard); she has also drawn illustrations of local sheep and goats. The adventurers may note the style is identical to the cave paintings at the opening Painted Cave.

This bedchamber was shared by Ilarion and (when she still lived) his apprentice/lover, Signy Mallorian. One of two unlocked chests in the room holds the wizard's spare clothes: a tall hat, hooded cap (fur-trimmed, worth \$1,000), a long coat, and a long scarf. Hidden in the back is a bottle of 100-year-old whiskey worth \$400. Beside the bed lies a staff with onyx tip and 20-point Powerstone, which the cavemen took from the wizard. A second chest contains neatly folded women's clothing and shoes of simple but attractive cut (\$500), plus some personal basics including an ivory comb (\$100) and a small silver hand mirror (\$200).

Cave Shaman Ika-Loana

An unusually pretty cavewoman with startling blue eyes emphasized by mask-like black markings around them. Her body is daubed with blue paint. She wears a necklace of animal teeth, strategic bits of fur, and a (currently) sheathed bone knife. Her life-mate, Oog (p. 16) is always near.

ST 11; **DX** 12; **IQ** 13; **HT** 14.

Damage 1d-1/1d+1; BL 24 lbs.; HP 13; Will 15; Per 17; FP 14. Basic Speed 6.50; Basic Move 6; Dodge 9; Parry 10 (Knife). SM 0; 5'5"; 124 lbs.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Animal Empathy; Impulsive (12); Low TL (TL0); Magery 2; Nosy; Proud.

Skills: Artist (Painting)-13; Area Knowledge-11; Brawling-12; Cooking-12; Dancing-13; Hiking-12; Knife-14; Knot Tying-12; Leadership-14; Naturalist-14; Stealth-14; Survival (Mountains)-14; Religious Ritual-15; Tracking-13

Spells: Beast Soother-15; Create Fire-14; Death Vision-20; Deflect Energy-14; Heat-14; Ignite Fire-14; Lend Energy-14; Lend Vitality-14, Minor Healing-15, Recover Energy-15, Resist Cold-14 Shape Fire-15, Flame Weapon-15, Flame Jet-15, Summon Spirit-17, Warmth-15.

Equipment: Bone knife (1d-2 imp).

Oog the Bear-Hunter

The shaman's mate is large (6' tall) and fat initiate of a prehistoric bear cult. He wears a hooded bearskin and a necklace of bear fangs. If confronted by well-armed adventurers, he will grin, throw down his club, roar, and shape change into a giant cave bear!

ST 14; **DX** 12; **IQ** 9; **HT** 10.

Damage 1d/2d; BL 39 lbs.; HP 14; Will 11; Per 11; FP 10.

Basic Speed 6.00; Basic Move 6; Dodge 9; Parry 9 (Broadsword).

SM 0; 6'; 300 lbs.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Alternate Form (Cave Bear; Reduced Time, 1 second); Appearance (Unattractive); Bloodlust (12); Combat Reflexes; DR 1 (skull only); Impulsiveness (9); Low TL (TL0); Lunacy; Overweight; Sense of Duty (clan); Short Lifespan 1; Temperature Tolerance (Cold); Tribal Language (Native).

Skills: Brawling-13; Broadsword-12; Dropping-11; Gesture-11; Meditation-10; Naturalist-11; Stealth-12; Survival (Mountains)-11; Throwing-11; Tracking-10; Wrestling-12.

Equipment: Club (2d+1 cr; Reach 1).

Oog's Cave Bear Form

ST: 30 **HP:** 30 **Speed:** 6.50

DX: 14 **Will:** 13 **Move:** 7

IQ: 5 **Per:** 13

HT: 12 **FP:** 12 **SM:** +1

Dodge: 10 **Parry:** 11 **DR:** 3

Bite (16): 3d+2 cutting. Reach C.

Claw (16): 3d+5 crushing. Reach C.

Torso Grapple (14): No damage, but on further turns can squeeze (*Choke or Strangle*, p. B370).

Traits: Claws (Blunt); Combat Reflexes; Fearlessness 5; Fur; Teeth (Sharp); Temperature Tolerance 5 (Cold).

Skills: Brawling-16; Survival (Mountains)-13; Swimming-13; Tracking-12; Wrestling-14.

Class: Animal.

The lands past the gates are dangerous.

8 and 10. Slime Trails

Coming from 11 and running in a circle between 8, 9, and 10 is a 3'-wide trail of caustic purple slime (1 point corrosive damage if touched).

9. Cavern of the Slime

In this cavern is a yard-wide purple slime monster, feeding on the smoking body of a caveman. The slime recently came through the gate in 11.

Primordial Purple Slime

ST: 0 **HP:** 20 **Speed:** 6.00

DX: 12 **Will:** 0 **Move:** 1

IQ: 0 **Per:** 10

HT: 12 **FP:** 12 **SM:** 0

Dodge: 9 **Parry:** N/A **DR:** 0

Pseudopod (11): 3d-1 corrosion. Reach C, 1.

Torso Grapple (11): No damage, but on further turns can squeeze (*Choke or Strangle*, p. B370) using its HP 20 instead of its ST.

Traits: Amphibious; Doesn't Breathe; Doesn't Sleep; High Pain Threshold; Immunity to Metabolic Hazards; Injury Tolerance (Diffuse; Infiltration, Can ooze under barriers and through tiny holes); Innate Attack (2d corrosion; Melee; Reach C, 1); Invertebrate; No Legs (Slithers); No Manipulators; Vibration Sense (Air).

Class: Slime.

Notes: Nonsentient – *can't* communicate or negotiate. Unaffected by Animal or Plant spells that don't specifically target slimes. Once dead, slime can be used (or sold) as one dose of Oozing Doom. As a strange primordial from the dawn of time, valuable to scholars interested in researching the origins of life (\$2,000).

11. Cavern of the Dawn

The air in the cavern reeks of rotten eggs. In the center of the room are bleached, corroded bones of some creature – perhaps a cave man. A purple slime trail leads to (or from!) a smashed iron-bound door. Visible through it is a shimmering rectangle in the north wall.

The gate is a permanent gate created by Ilarion. It leads back hundreds of millions of years into the ancient past, when the only life on land was primordial slime.

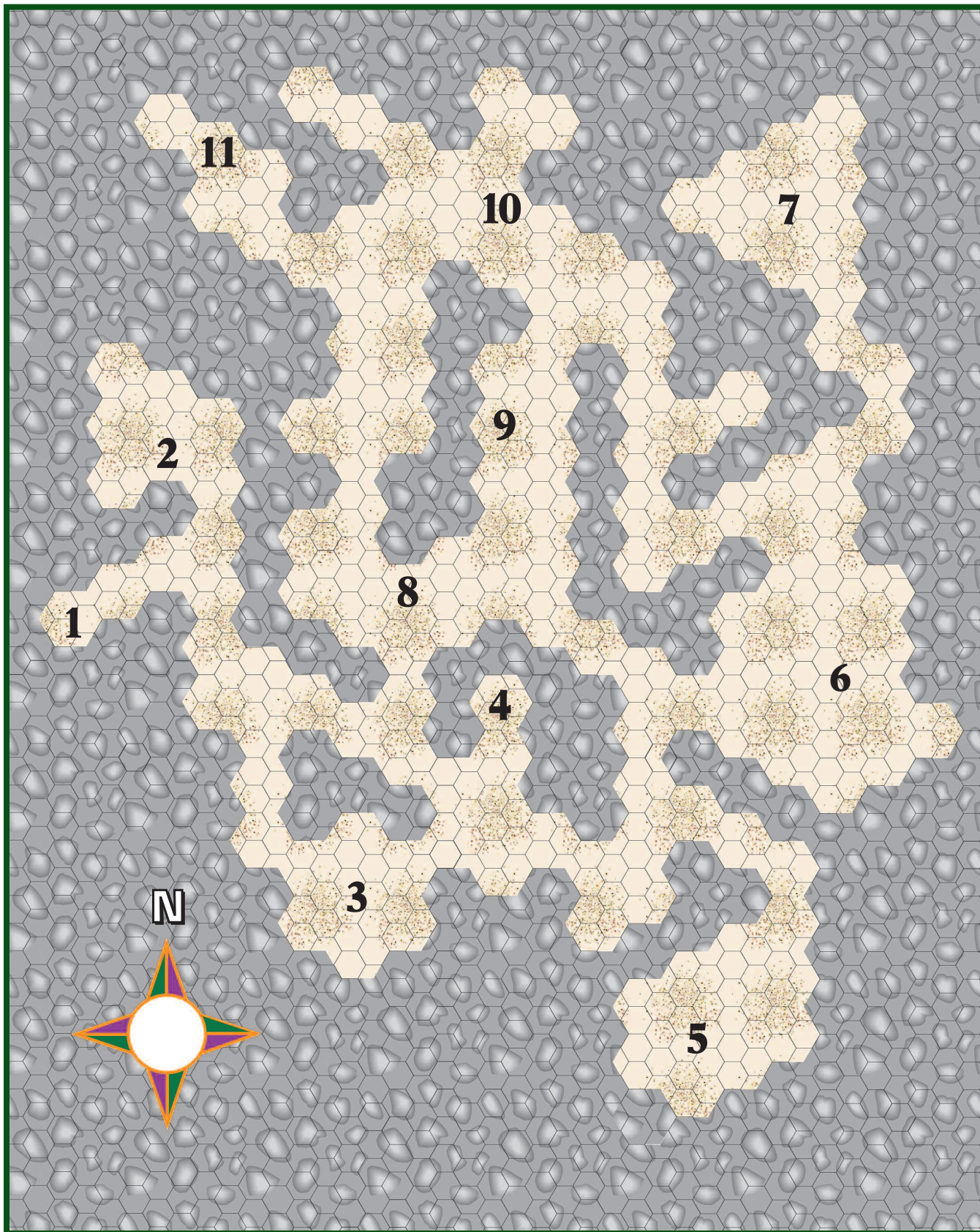
The gate opens into barren, rocky shore by a purple sea. In the sky above, the moon is visible, unnaturally large. On the horizon, a volcano sends a plume of ash into the air. The lands is barren rock, split with occasional dark cracks and crevices. However, emerging from the shallow water just beyond the shore are many dozens of brownish, dome-shaped formations, each a yard wide and 4' high. They seem too regular to be ordinary rocks. (Close up, a faint fizz of small bubbles surrounds them).

The air past the gate is dangerous. The primal world has less oxygen and more sulfur and carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. The atmosphere is Thin (p. B249) and somewhat toxic due to high carbon dioxide and sulfur levels (HT-2 roll each minute or take 1 point toxic damage). The ozone layer is also thinner, so in addition to the breathing issues, there's a risk of painful sunburn (hourly HT-4 roll or 1 point burn damage).

A more immediate threat are the primal slimes that lurk beneath the ground. There's a 1-in-6 chance each minute that one or more will ooze out of a crack to try and absorb any visitors!

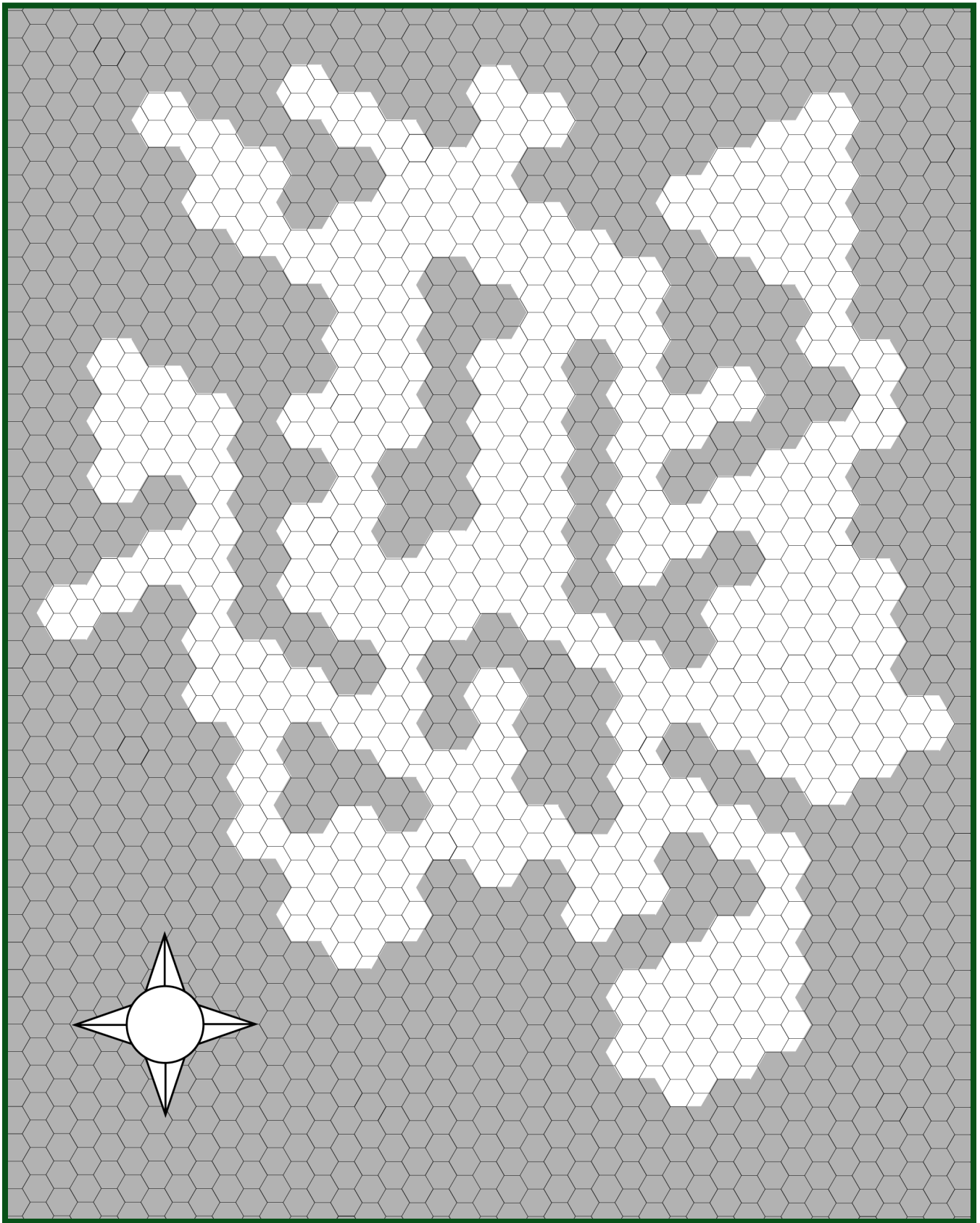
ABOUT THE COLUMNIST

David L. Pulver is a Canadian freelance author. An avid SF fan, he began roleplaying in junior high with the newly released *Basic Dungeons & Dragons*. Upon graduating from university, he decided to become a game designer. Since then, David has written over 70 roleplaying game books, and he has worked as a staff writer, editor, and line developer for Steve Jackson Games and Guardians of Order. He is best known for creating *Transhuman Space*, co-authoring the *Big Eyes, Small Mouth* anime RPG, and writing countless *GURPS* books, including the *GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition*, *GURPS Ultra-Tech*, and the *GURPS Spaceships* series.



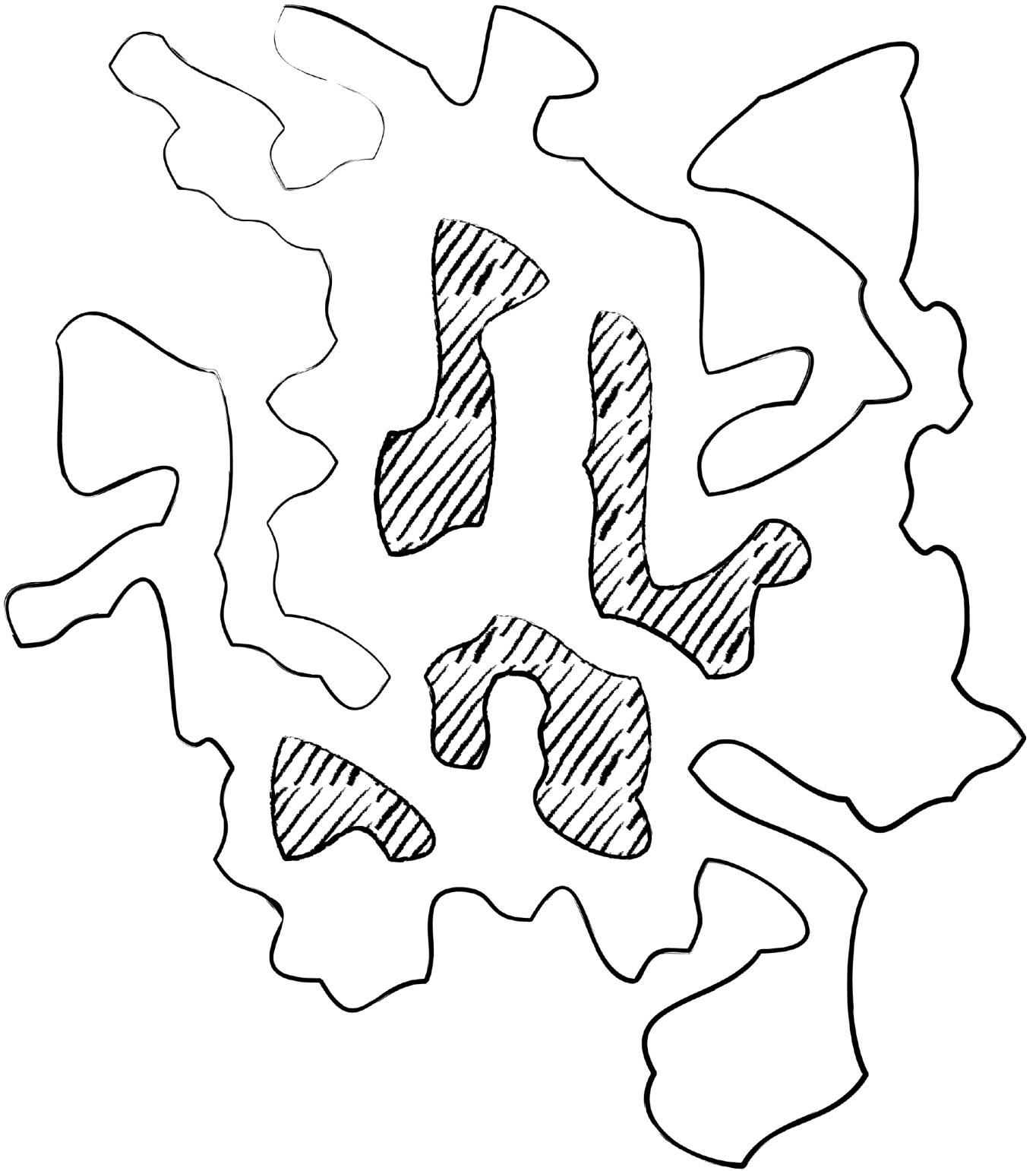
MAP OF THE STONEDRAGON HILL CAVES (DETAILED)

Scale: 1 hex = 1 yard



MAP OF THE STONEDRAGON HILL CAVES (BLANK)

Scale: 1 hex = 1 yard



The Caves of Stonedragon Hill

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WHERE THE SNOW BLEEDS

BY J. EDWARD TREMLETT

Long Face scowled, struggling to see through the snowstorm. Behind him, the hunters tried to make fire. Before him, there was white wind, occasionally parting to show trees and rocks.

"Wood," Quick Leap shouted: "More wood. Dry wood."

"No more wood," someone else mumbled. Long Face could not tell who.

Someone shouted, and lights flickered behind him. He turned for just a second, smiling to see fire, and then turned back.

Too late.

The White Man stood before him. His skin like the snow. His eyes red like blood.

His fists raised and heavy.

Long Face cried out, readying his spear. He dodged the first blow, but not the next. Something snapped, and he fell to the ground, moaning.

Then he watched the white wind part, revealing four more of them . . .

Earth is still in the grip of the Wurm Ice Age. Cro-Magnon (*Homo sapiens sapiens*) is the dominant strain of humanity, and has been for the last two millennia, since the Neanderthals mysteriously vanished. Of that lost tribe of humanity, only fanciful stories remain, and they are not all clear.

The truth might be difficult for modern people – let alone primitives ones – to understand.

About 2,000 years ago, Earth was invaded by hideous, giant, fungoid creatures – alien conquerors in search of a perfect slave race. They swooped down from the skies and strode across Europe, capturing entire Neanderthal tribes in one go. Then, when they could carry no more in their ships, they departed for the stars, leaving the Neanderthal race shattered and doomed to extinction.

Now, one of the fungoid creatures has returned, carrying with it the spoils of its last visit. It plans to use its slaves to gather yet more slaves, the better to shape this developing planet into a proper outpost of its empire. It's already taken one clan of a similar species, and found them quite suitable. Now it wants more.

Can the heroes – Cro-Magnon hunters just returned from a harsh winter – stand against this otherworldly threat? Or will they be the first of a new generation of mindless, immortal slaves, doomed to toil for their alien master where the snows bleed?

This adventure outline has been designed for four to six starting cavemen characters. Although *GURPS* game stats are given for the main villains, other difficulty values are left to the GM. Thus, this scenario could be run with other

sword-and-sorcery-based games, so long as the climate stays the same and the setting is kept primitive.

Making GURPS Cavemen

The PCs are Cro-Magnon men of the Sharp Antlers Clan, part of the Three Mountains Tribe. Use *Caveman Fundamentals* (pp. 4-11) to design their stats, except that they do not have access to bows or bolas. Most of the party should be hunters (pp. 5-6), but some could be gatherers, craftsmen, or storytellers. It's recommended they not be shamans or leaders. All equipment is basic, cheap, and poorly balanced (see *GURPS Low-Tech*, pp. 14, 16, 59). See *GURPS Ice Age* (pp. 20-23) for details on their culture.

THE TIME OF RETURNING

It's spring again, and the Sharp Antlers are on the move, heading through craggy hills and shallow, wooded valleys as they go north.

At this time, the tribe gathers near the Three Mountains. Together, they will speak of the things they have seen and done, and hear the words of the elders and the wise. New children will be introduced to the tribe, and those who have come of age will undergo initiation. Disputes between rival clans will be settled, either by decree or contest.

The winter was long and harsh. The Sharp Antlers went south with 40 people, but now return with only 30. Cold took the very old and very young, and a few died from eating bad meat. But that meant more food for those who lived, and so the clan survived.

There is always the worry that they will arrive to find an empty valley. But when they come closer to the Three Mountains, they hear the far-off sounds of joy and familiar laughter. The others have survived. The tribe continues.

Close to the massive clearing, the PCs' clan is met by the Running Foxes, a clan very friendly to the Sharp Antlers. Black Tooth, its leader, greets them warmly, and talks with them of new things as they head for the camp. He tells them which clans are feuding, who will be initiated into the elders, who did not live through the winter, and so on.

There is a concern: the Dark Clouds, who camp by the tall and broken mountain, northwest of here, have yet to arrive. They usually come first, because their winter camp is closest.

Many are wondering if the spirits of the tribe the Three Mountains took this land from, ages ago, returned and killed them.

THE GATHERING

In the wide, open plain, before the Three Mountains, rough shelters are being erected. The sound of laughter, singing, argument, and children playing becomes louder. The Sharp Antlers now know they have come home.

As the Sharp Antlers approach and add their song to the noise, they are greeted with other clan songs, cries of joy, and hugs from old friends. The Hill Stalkers – their greatest rivals – greet them warmly but warily. No doubt they'll be quarreling soon enough, but for now, everyone is glad they all survived another winter.

The clan makes its way to the center of the gathering, where the oldest clan leaders tend the great fire and speak of secrets and days gone by. The leader of the Sharp Antlers greets them, and asks permission to rejoin the tribe. The elders, of course, allow it, and ask if they would watch the tree-line tomorrow night.

The rest of the day is a flurry of activity. The tents have to be put up and a firepit dug. Other clans come by to welcome them and catch up on what's happened. There are tears of sadness at the passing of the lost, joy at new births and good news, and juicy gossip about which clan's angry with who, and why.

One clan's leader says, quietly, that he overheard the elders talking about a red storm that passed by the tall and broken mountain, just before the snows left. They said that the storm moved low, and *against* the wind, and that blood fell from it. However, he hastens to add that he could have been mistaken in what he heard, and does not want that story spread with his name attached to it.

That night, a communal meal is overseen by the elders. The Hill Stalkers caught the game, and they make a point of serving the Sharp Antlers last.

The clans want to speak of their news, but the tribe is not yet whole. Some of the clan leaders speak of this, and say they should search for the Dark Clouds. Others say to go looking would be an insult to them.

This causes bickering, but the elders call for silence. They confer for a time, and declare that if the Dark Clouds have not arrived in three days, a single clan should send its hunters to search. They say they have reason for concern – bad auguries have been seen in the skies, and worrisome signs in the trees.

If one of the PCs asks about the red cloud, the elders become angry that someone overheard them speaking. They do eventually admit that such a thing was seen, but they will not elaborate, at least for now.

The rest of the evening is taken up with food, songs, and contests of strength. No one from the Hill Stalkers will play with the Sharp Antlers, and each group does its best to pretend the other doesn't exist.

THE LATE ARRIVAL

The next day sees two more clans arrive, but not the Dark Clouds. More greetings are made and stories told, but there is a growing sense of worry. As the sun slowly creeps to the horizon, the tribe looks to the northwest, hoping they will see the clan coming through the tree-line, but they never do.

That night, the clan's hunters take torches from the main fire, split up, and walk the tree-line in small groups, watching for predators or attackers. Ideally, all the PCs should be in the same group.

As the PCs' group passes the northwest edge of the clearing, they hear movement in the trees. If they stay and watch, they see a hunter weakly stumble toward them, his body spattered with fresh blood and his skin spotted white, as though he had been ineptly powdered for a ceremony. His eyes are wide, his mouth is open, and he does not seem to know where he is.

"White Men . . ." he cries as he stumbles along. "White men. White men . . ."

He takes two steps into the clearing and then falls to his knees, weeping. It is only then that someone recognizes him as Short Finger of the Dark Clouds – one of their better hunters.

This news is worth interrupting the fire for, obviously. The entire camp comes to see what has happened, and the Elders order the PCs to take Short Finger to their camp, so they may tend to him. They also order that this side of the clearing be guarded by all hunters, in case other Dark Clouds come as well.

The Hill Stalkers immediately volunteer to go looking for whoever did this to Short Finger. They grab the torches from the PCs, and take off into the woods.

As the PCs take Short Finger back to the elders camp, they hear him say "White men took them . . . took them all. The mountain is on fire. The snow is bleeding." If prompted for more information, he will only repeat that the snow was bleeding.

They soon discover the "blood" is actually red, translucent goop that smells of fungus. If they get any on their skin, it turns it pale white. It takes a lot of scrubbing with water to get the whiteness out. This may explain why Short Finger is covered in white spots.

The Hill Stalkers come back some time later, frustrated and confused. They say they went some distance into the woods, but lost Short Finger's trail. They saw no "white men," and no sign of a battle. They did not find any of the other Dark Clouds.

A MYSTERY AND A CHALLENGE

The rest of the night is tense. Many hunters watch the edge of the woods, and make fires to see into the trees. The flames create strange shadows, and many times, a hunter thinks he can see the "White Men" Short Finger spoke of.

All night long, the elders tend to Short Finger, and sing over him. The PCs may be asked to bring water and help, but eventually, he is taken into the elders' tent, so they may perform their medicine.

The next morning, before the assembled clans, the elders speak. They say that Short Finger is alive, and the blood was not his blood. In fact, it was *not* blood, but rather something like the juice that runs from certain mushrooms that are not good to eat. It made his skin white where it touched.

He has been frightened by a terrible thing, and may never recover. He speaks of "White Men" who came upon the Dark Clouds' camp, and that they took the other Dark Clouds. He was out hunting when it occurred, and saw it happen without being observed by them.

What happened next is uncertain. He spoke of a mountain on fire and the snow bleeding. After that, he said nothing more, and he now sleeps.

The tribe almost goes berserk with worry and anger. Hunters cry that these were men of the tribe that once held this land. Others say that these White Men are cannibals, or monsters.

The elders call for calm. A group must go to where the Dark Clouds had their spring camp – three days' walk from here – and find out what happened. Who will do this dangerous thing for the good of the tribe?

This would be an excellent chance for the PCs' clan to improve their standing, but they will have to speak quickly. If they do not volunteer *immediately*, the Hill Stalkers leap up and say they will go. However, if the PCs' clan volunteers, the Hill Stalkers shout them down, saying they should be the ones to do this thing.

This is rude, and some clans tell them to be quiet, but other clans shout that they should be heard. The elders do not care to deal with this, but one of them proposes a test. Both clans should send forth their best man, and they should fight without weapons to see goes.

One of the PCs should do this, rather than the clan leader; a victory will increase that person's standing within the clan and tribe. Whomever the Hill Stalkers send out to fight will have slightly better dexterity and strength, but have slightly inferior fighting skills. The entire tribe will cheer them on, and the fight lasts until one man cannot get back up, or asks to end the contest.

If the PCs' clan wins, the Hill Stalkers slink away back to their own camp, embarrassed. The elders advise the PCs to go to tomorrow, at first light. That night the Sharp Antlers are feted around the campfire, and fed very well. The elders sing over them and make their magic, so that they will have a successful hunt.

If the Hill Stalkers win, they use their time in the eyes of the tribe to make rude comments about the Sharp Antlers. They will be feted and sung over at the fire, that night, and continue to rub it in. It might be best if the PCs go back to camp and stay there until the Hill Stalkers leave.

If the Hill Stalkers go first, a week goes by, and they do not return. The elders confer and decide that another group should go, and ask the PCs first. They could say no, but this would be a good way to regain their standing in the tribe after being embarrassed.

SEARCHING FOR DARK CLOUDS

It's three days' walk to the Dark Clouds' camp, in the direction of the broken mountain. The clan leader and a few hunters of the clan will stay behind and watch the women, children, and the camp. Black Tooth also promises to make sure no one causes trouble for their clan.

Following the trail takes them up into the hills, where the snow stays longer. The hills become steep and rocky, the air gets colder, and the trees become thicker and shorter.

On the second day out, there is a weird and bad smell. It's like mushrooms, but sweeter, and reminds the party of the smell of the red paste on Short Finger. It carries on the breeze, down the hills from the broken mountain.

From then on, the animals vanish, and they can hunt no game. The birds and insects are silent, and the group gets the feeling they are being watched. But no amount of traps or laying in wait flushes out whoever's watching.

On the third day, they get to the Dark Clouds' camp. It is wrecked, deserted, and stinking with that terrible smell. The tents are torn down, and there are spatters of the red, translucent slime in several spots. There are also spatters of dried blood.

There are no Dark Clouds (or Hill Stalkers, if they went first). However, the Dark Clouds' supplies and food are still in the wreckage, along with their weapons and tools. If this had been a raid by another tribe, they would have taken those things as well as the people.

A trail leads toward the broken mountain: footprints and things being dragged. Every so often there's spoor of the red, transparent goop on that trail, and the smell gets worse as they go along.

If the Hill Stalkers went first, the PCs find their tracks nestled inside the tracks they're following.

Why would this skull-smashing ritual be performed so long after individuals had died? Did they only pose a threat to the living long after their original burial and death?

– Bryan Nelson, "Stone Age People May Have Battled Against a Zombie Apocalypse,"
Mother Nature Network

THE VALLEY OF THE WHITE MEN

As they head to the broken mountain, three more days away, the snows get deeper, and the smell gets worse. They can see no animal tracks, and the silence is unnerving. At night an odd, red glow is in the sky in the direction they're heading – like the lights that sometimes play in the northern sky, only red.

A day out from the beetling, cracked mountain, the PCs find a twisting, rocky valley, nestled between two steep, snow-covered hills. The trail goes through it, but the way turns, so that they cannot see the end from the beginning.

If they go in, they get halfway through and find signs of a struggle between many people. If the Hill Stalkers preceded the PCs, their broken spears lie here, along with spatters of red slime and blood.

White Men are here, lying in wait. Five are on each hill, buried in the snows just atop the valley walls. Underneath them is a vein of red, glowing goo, giving them orders.

The only warning the PCs get of an attack is snow tumbling down both sides of the valley, and then the silent, pale beings leap down. The White Men fight to the finish, but want to subdue their foes, not kill them. Thus, they prefer to punch the face and vitals, forcing knockdown rolls (p. B420). Once a caveman has fallen to negative HP, the White Men will focus on grappling or pulled punches, so that the real danger is of the PC failing the unconsciousness roll he must make every turn.

If the heroes instead go up one of the hills, the five White Men on their hill wait until they've gotten to the other side, and then wake up, and stalk after them. The ones on the other hill only come after the PCs if they overcome the first five.

The White Men

Neanderthals snatched up by the Visitor the last time it visited Earth, these unfortunate beings had their blood replaced with the red, fungal brain-goo of their abductor. Over time, they became pale, unaging, and nearly mindless, suitable only to act as the Visitor's eyes and hands.

They have skin the color of snow, eyes red as blood, and they stink of the goo inside their skins. They wear no clothes and carry no weapons, using their fists to subdue their opponents. They do not speak or cry out – even when mortally wounded.

Cutting them unleashes a steaming torrent of red, transparent goo. Any living skin touched by it turns as pale as that of the White Men, though it goes back to normal once it's washed off. The creatures are very susceptible to fire, yet do not fear it.

If a White Man loses enough of the red slime that sustains him, he falls down dead, and the remaining goo runs out his mouth, nose, and eyes. The greater part of it collects into a single, heaving mass that slithers toward the nearest vein of the Visitor, and goes into it. The White Man's body soon collapses into dust.

ST: 13 **HP:** 13 **Speed:** 6.50
DX: 10 **Will:** 9 **Move:** 6
IQ: 9 **Per:** 10
HT: 16 **FP:** 16 **SM:** 0

Dodge: 9 **Parry:** 10 (Unarmed) **DR:** 0

Punch (14): 1d crushing. Reach C.

Traits: Bad Smell; Cannot Learn; Doesn't Breathe; Doesn't Eat or Drink; Doesn't Sleep; Frightens Animals; Hidebound; High Pain Threshold; Immunity to Metabolic Hazards; Mute; Incurious (6); Indomitable; Injury Tolerance (No Blood, No Brain, No Vitals, Unliving); Innumerate; Low Empathy; No Sense of Humor; Reprogrammable; Single-Minded; Silence; Slave Mentality; Social Stigma (Dead); Temperature Tolerance 5; Unaging; Unfazeable; Unnatural Appearance; Vulnerability (Fire x4); Wealth (Dead Broke).

Skills: Brawling-14; Stealth-15.

Notes: When dead, the body slowly turns to dust.

If the PCs succeed in killing all the White Men, 10 more will be sent from the broken mountain. If the party flees and leaves its dead and wounded, the remaining White Men will drag the living and dead off to the cave, and not bother chasing the others. If the party is defeated by the White Men, most should be unconscious rather than dead; they will wake up while being dragged into a cave.

Investigating the dead bodies – for as long as they hold up – shows that these men are different. Their foreheads are short, their brows are pronounced, and their jaws jut forward too much. Those who know the stories of the Not-Men of the Time Before may think this is them. But they do not remember stories of blood-that's-not-blood or that horrible smell.

Checking the snow around the hills shows that several thick, red roots run between the soil and the snow. They pulse with dull, red light that becomes more pronounced at night, when an entire network of red lines can be seen under the snows. These all connect like the roots of a plant, and head toward the broken mountain.

The red roots are tough, but can be cut through (DR 6). Gouts of red slime burble and spray out, and then the root closes back up. The goo collects in a pool, and then, without warning, lurches into life. It seeks out the nearest root, and slowly slides back into it.

Although it might seem wise to go back to the tribe, tell the elders what they have seen, and bring back many hunters, they have no proof of their words. Such a strange story could be thought of as lies, and bring the party disgrace. They may even be accused of killing the Hill Stalkers, and blaming it on monsters!

Better that they should go forward. Maybe they can kill all these White Men. Or maybe they can find proof they *can* take back with them.

THE HEART OF THE BROKEN MOUNTAIN

Past the valley, the landscape shifts into a downward slope, heading for the broken mountain. The trees become few, the way rockier. A snowstorm begins to fall, obscuring the path, but at this point, the destination is obvious.

At night, the pattern of red, pulsing roots can be seen during breaks in the storm. They twist and turn and come together at the base of the mountain, forming a bright light that pulses like the heart of a dangerous beast, and can be seen even through the worst of the snow.

The Visitor sends 10 White Men to attack at a sufficiently spooky point that evening – suddenly appearing out of the waves of snow. As before, they attempt to subdue, rather than kill. If the PCs succeed in killing them, the Visitor sends no more that evening.

The red roots lead to large cave entrance, at the base of the mountain – the source of the bright light they saw last night. The roots come out of the snows and join together into a network of larger, pulsing vines, lining the entire cave mouth.

Five White Men are buried in the snow, nearby. The moment the PCs enter the cave, they rise, attacking

from behind.

The cave floor goes up 10', and then down into the mountain at a gentle slope. It is cold and dry, rather than warm and moist. The vines' red glow provides more than enough light to see by. Every so often, another five White Men come up from the depths of the cave to do battle, but their numbers never increase to more than five at a time.

The tunnel goes on for 500' and then opens into a majestic, wide-open chamber, 100' in diameter and at least 75' high. The floor and walls are covered with red vines, and they seem to be holding up the roof of the cavern somehow. The entire chamber is bathed in red, pulsing light.

All vines lead to the center of the chamber, where sits a massive, unearthly thing. The Visitor looks like an accretion of giant, puffy, pale-pink fungi, some 40' in diameter and perhaps 20' high. The mass is shot through with glowing, blood red veins, and several large, pulsing, clear globs of red goo. Inside those globs are more White Men, floating like sleeping fish in cold water.

Up against the far wall, directly behind the Visitor, is a large, pulsing ball of red slime, about 20' in diameter. The remaining 42 Dark Clouds float inside of it, asleep and unmoving, with their skin as white as snow. (The Hill Stalkers will be in there too, along with any captured members of the PCs' party; their skins won't be as pale.)

If the PCs do any significant damage to the ball (DR 6), it bursts open, and the captured tribesmen flow out of it. Half the Dark Clouds – the very old and very young – are now White Men, and attack the PCs. The others still retain their minds, but are barely able to move, much less fight. Hill Stalkers and captured Sharp Antlers quickly come to their senses, and help defend the PCs.

If they turn tail and just flee, 10 White Men ambush them by the mouth of the cave, but they will not be pursued any further. In seven days, 20 White Men attack the camp; Dark Clouds and/or Hill Stalkers will be among them.

If they free the captured tribesmen, and then run from the cave without attacking the Visitor, 10 White Men ambush them by the mouth of the cave, and chase them as far as the rocky valley (where the PCs were first attacked). The Visitor waits three months to strike again. By this time, the tribe has split up for the summer, and the White Men will pick them off one clan at a time.

If they attack the Visitor several times before or after freeing the captured people or before felling, the visitor begins to retreat into itself (see *The Visitor*, above). Every successful strike on the Visitor brings the White Men to their knees in pain for five minutes. Unless the PCs wiped out the current crop of White Men, they are chased as far as the destroyed village. If they aren't all captured or killed by then, the Visitor prepares to leave Earth.

A STORY TO TELL

If the PCs hustle, they can make it back to the tribe in five days. They get back just as the Running Foxes are making ready to head after them.

Whether the Elders believe the PCs' story depends on if the Hill Stalkers went first, and who comes back with them. If the PCs are alone, the story of the giant red creature is treated with skepticism, but if the Hill Stalkers did not go first, the PCs are mocked by them, and accused of telling lies to mask their failure to find the White Men or the Dark Clouds.

Lying to the elders could lead to banishment, so the PCs might think to bring up the red storm that was seen, some time ago – perhaps that was the creature coming? That alone won't prove their case, but it may give the elders something to think about. By the time they reach a decision, the White Men may be about to attack to tribe, which would render such things moot.

However, if they brought back any of the Dark Clouds and/or Hill Stalkers, the testimony of those clansmen is sufficient proof. The Elders will hear of what happened from the Dark Clouds: How the birds and animals left after the red storm was in the sky. How the clan starved and became scared. How the White Men came in the night, a moon ago, and took them all but Short Finger, who was hunting. How they were placed into the red blood but not drowned, and

dreamed of horrible, red roots going on forever and ever between the stars.

Such testimony, or an actual attack on the entire tribe, galvanizes the elders to send the hunters to the cave with fire and spears. What they find there depends on whether the Visitor was wounded by the PCs or not. If not, the cave will be full of 150 White Men, and there will be a battle that will live in the legends of the tribe for as long as it exists.

However, if the Visitor *was* wounded (losing about 20 HP), then it leaves Earth as soon as possible. The night after the PCs return to the tribe, a strange storm comes from the east – appearing with a single, deep boom and several bursts of silent lightning. A low, red cloud flies against the wind, toward the broken mountain, and settles there until the dawn. By morning it is gone, and when the tribesmen return to the cave, the red roots and vines are gone, and the cavern has collapsed – taking half the tunnel with it. The bodies of White Men lie in and around the cave mouth, half-collapsed from the shock, and no animals will feed from them.

There is nothing left but foreboding, and a hint of that sickly sweet smell.

The Visitor

Best described as the gargantuan, motile, and sentient cousin of the bleeding tooth fungus (*Hydnellum peckii*), the Visitor is a member of a usurious extraterrestrial species that seeks to propagate itself across the galaxy. Blind and usually immobile, it enslaves carbon-based life forms that it can pump full of its brain fluid. This halts their aging process, enslaves their motor functions, and lets the Visitor see the world through their eyes.

The Visitor is fully spread out by the time the humans arrive, and therefore immobile. This is a good thing, as the PCs would be utterly slaughtered by a fully mobile Visitor. All it can do now is exude White Men to fight them off, but it has many.

Should the Visitor decide that its White Men are ineffective or been attacked several times, it stops sending out its slaves and begins to spool its roots and vines back into itself, quadrupling in size and gaining close to 100 heavy, pulverizing tentacles (5d cr). It's unlikely that the PCs can actually do enough damage with fire and spears to kill it in that time (about an hour), but they're welcome to try.

In *GURPS* games, The Visitor has 500 HP. Its roots have DR 6, and the Visitor's main body has DR 8. Like the White Men, it has Vulnerability (Fire x4).

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.

PREHISTORIC PLOTS

BY MEGAN McDONALD

Sometime around 100,000 years ago, *Homo sapiens* became the only surviving humans on the planet. But not long before that, several hominid races thrived in the world. No one knows exactly how *Homo sapiens* became the sole survivors, and that makes it fertile ground for adventures of many types. Did we survive because of our superior brains? Did we exterminate our rivals? Did a plague wipe out the competition? Or were there other forces at work? Regardless, the world our ancestors inhabited was one fraught with peril and full of monstrous predators, unpredictable weather, and competition for scarce resources. At the same time, humans were still humans, and the politics and cultural dynamics that we see today may have been present then as well.

*Happy Wind:
Grandfather, where did
you get this big bear skin?*

*Windwalker: From a big
bear . . . that's where.*

– *Windwalker*

THE ICE AGE COMETH

The winter was especially harsh this year and took its toll on your clan. Worse, the thaw that should have started weeks ago has yet to happen. Your tribe's leaders put on a brave face, but they are obviously concerned. Though they can't prove it, everyone believes that the weather is getting colder every year. Many people are concerned that the gods are punishing the group. Some think it is for wicked behavior (though they aren't sure who is at fault); others believe that the gods are demonstrating that your leaders are weak and need to be replaced. It falls to you, the brightest and bravest of your clan, to find a way forward for your people in this

inhospitable new world. Will you seek out a cause for the changing climate, or look for a way for your people to adapt to this new "normal"?

The Ice Age is a fruitful time to place a campaign. The world was changing rapidly for our early human ancestors, and they almost certainly lacked the ability to understand why, not to mention the ability to do anything about it. And yet, somehow, they managed to survive. The harsh climate is itself a worthy enemy to a band of Ice Age heroes, with its extreme temperatures and unusual precipitation, as well as the shifting landscape and the changes in plant growth and animal migration.

POWER PLAY

The old chieftain is nearing the end of his life and the jockeying to replace him has begun. The chieftain's daughter claims that she should, by rights, be named the new leader. The son of the man who lost control of the tribe to the current chieftain has other ideas. The two candidates have begun approaching those they feel are the most important to woo to their side with promises of power, influence, and wealth. Whose side will you take in the coming conflict? Or will you support a candidate of your own?

Early humans may not have had television or the Internet to campaign with, but politics had to be afoot. Even if the campaigns involved bribing people with choice cuts of mammoth meat, the underlying political machinations were probably pretty similar. Mudslinging may have involved real mud in addition to insults, and commercials could have been painted on cave walls, but campaign promises of a better future would have remained the same.

DIVINE INTERVENTION

The leaders ask you to travel to the top of the highest mountain, a sacred spot to your people, and beseech the sun to return. They have given you a nice collection of attractive things, including a pretty youngster, in the hopes that you will be able to lure the sun back to the sky.

Ah, the epic quest to please the gods themselves. What kind of religion did early man have, if any? We don't really know. That leaves plenty of room to create a custom pantheon, though one undoubtedly simple and focused on nature. The gods might directly influence the lives of mortals – but even if they aren't real, religious practices will still be vital.

EXPLORERS

Resources have become scarce. Soon, enough game won't be available to support your people. The leaders ask you to journey deep into the southern territories, farther than your clan has ever traveled before, in the hopes of finding a place where your people can take refuge and find food. Who knows what dangers await you there? You only know that your clan's future depends on you.

Games of exploration and discovery are well-suited to the prehistoric setting. After all, vast swaths of the planet have yet to be trod upon by human feet. The campaign could be reminiscent of a post-apocalyptic or fantasy world, with outposts of civilization between vast areas populated by environmental hazards and monstrous creatures. Or, you can go with a more sci-fi approach of "exploring strange new worlds and seeking out new life and new civilizations."

*There are not many men yet.
Just a few tribes scattered across
the wilderness. Never venturing
far, unaware that other tribes
exist even. Too busy with
their own lives to be curious.
Too frightened of the unknown
to wander. Their laws are simple:
the strong take everything.*

– Narrator,
One Million Years B.C.

THE DAWN OF MAN

For generations, your people have lived in the caves here, hunting large game on the plains and collecting the plentiful seeds and berries that grow along the foothills. Lately, however, distressing news has spread from one family group to another in your area: New tribes of strange looking creatures have moved into the surrounding territory, killing game and people with equal joy. While they look like your people in some respects, they are taller, thinner, and have darker skin and more streamlined features. In an attempt to prevent an attack from these foreign invaders, several local family groups have agreed to work together – an unprecedented move. Your elders have decided to send a handful of their best warriors and smartest scholars to size up this new enemy and discover a way to protect your people from these odd creatures from the south.

We tend to be rather *Homo sapiens*-centric when we think about humanity, but Neanderthals were humans, too.

They were so astonishingly similar to us in so many ways, and yet different enough to be a whole other species. A campaign could explore what it must have been like to be the masters of a domain, only to have a new yet similar creature come in and take over what had once been controlled so easily and for so many generations.

ON YOUR OWN

Your excitement at returning home from your first successful hunt turns to horror when you see the trampled remains of your tribe's settlement. Was it a stampeding mammoth, an attack by a rival tribe, or something else entirely? Your little band of survivors must decide what to do next. Do you investigate the event? Try to assimilate into another tribe? Or strike out on your own?

Orphaned teens who have to make good on their own – it's a classic story, whether the protagonists are living in the post-apocalyptic wastelands of a future Australia or on the fertile lands of the Nile River delta tens of thousands of years ago. "Coming of age" tales of kids forced to make their way in the world on their own are perfect for the unforgiving world of our very real past.

TURF WARS

A new tribe has ventured into your territory. While the natural resources had always been enough to sustain one tribe, there isn't enough to support two rival groups. Will you defend your territory? Make an alliance? Or will you strike out to find a new home?

Games of large-scale armies and tactics can be scaled down to the tribal level for a prehistoric setting. For players who enjoy big battles and the politics of nations, this is a reasonable prehistoric take.

PROMETHEUS

Fire has always been a source of danger to your people, but lately you've heard reports that a nearby tribe has learned to harness this powerful and frightening force. Your tribal leaders have tasked you with the job of taking this knowledge for your tribe. Will you seek to broker a deal with the rival tribe, or take what they have by force?

It's commonplace now, but at one point, fire was a strange, scary new thing to our human ancestors that radically shifted the balance of power. It gave us a way to protect ourselves from predators – and rivals – that wasn't based on strength. Perhaps even more importantly, it allowed us to better digest meat, the added protein from which may have allowed the users of fire to become smarter and stronger than other groups. As an integral part of our development as a species, it can be a strong basis for a campaign.

HERO OF LEGEND

You grew up hearing tales of your tribe's greatest hero, a man who led your tribe in glorious battles against rival tribes, who single-handedly slew a great monster the likes of which has not been seen since, and who ushered in a period of peace and prosperity for your people that has lasted for a generation.

When the tribe's storyteller asks to see you, you assume it is to remind you of your hero's greatness. The tale he tells, however, is very different from the one you had heard before. Is it possible that the skull of the great beast that still sits in the chieftain's cave was something your hero found while exploring a nearby marsh? Or that the great battles of the past against a villainous foe were actually simple raids of conquest against weaker tribes? Even if it were true, would revealing this truth to the rest of the tribe serve any purpose? The storyteller refuses to tell you how to proceed. Will you protect your hero's legacy as an example to your people, or reveal the truth?

As soon as we started telling each other stories around the campfire, we started creating heroes and villains. How those legends come to be, and how we use them, can be great fodder for a plot based around a serious moral dilemma.

HEART OF DARKNESS

You've heard disturbing reports that several of the neighboring tribes have sworn allegiance to a powerful man who claims to be a god. Not only does he have terrifying weapons unlike anything you have ever seen, he also seems able to heal wounds and disease that would otherwise have certainly been fatal. Is this person truly a god? Are his intentions admirable? Or is he a threat to your very existence?

What would happen if a person from the future came back to the prehistoric past? This kind of person might not have villainous motives, but can be a good foil for a prehistoric party nonetheless. He can end up being a real villain, of course, or be a person the party can help to return to his own time.

The age of several thriving hominid races is fertile ground for adventures.

WE COME FROM THE FUTURE

You've discovered a timeline where the indigenous life seems to have only recently evolved to the level of *Homo sapiens*. Will you use this opportunity to learn more about how early man evolved? Or will you take an active role in shaping this timeline to suit your needs?

Time-traveling heroes can easily venture into the distant past or a timeline that recreates it. It may seem like people from the future would face no challenges from the prehistoric past, but high-tech weapons and gear can only go so far, and future heroes can expect plenty of challenges from a prehistoric game, especially if those explorers are the first ones to discover the dangers of the past.

WE COME FROM THE PAST

While out on a hunt, your party discovered a shimmering disc that seems to cut through the very world. Objects thrown into it disappear instead of coming out the other side. All that comes through it are sounds unlike anything you've heard before: a rushing like a river, but punctuated by blasts of jarring sound, and what sounds like speech, but not in any language you've ever heard. Will you venture into the rift to discover where it goes?

Of course, time traveling also allows for the opposite. How would your caveman fair in the big city? After the apocalypse? In the middle ages? While the tendency here might be to do a "fish out of water" comedy, there's no reason you can't play this scenario seriously if you prefer.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Megan McDonald has been writing professionally since 2006, specializing in gaming, crafting, and cooking. Megan runs games at conventions and for friends, and has been playing roleplaying games (computer, tabletop, and play-by-email) for 15 years. Her life goals include being the first person to win a Pulitzer Prize for a video-game tie-in novel, and playing the voice of the computer in a movie, television show, or video game.



THE OLD WAYS

BY CHRISTOPHER R. RICE

Ten-Elk moved swiftly through the underbrush. He had lost his spear several miles back after he stabbed a Blood Bear tribesman in the thigh and it broke off. It didn't matter. The broken spear would've slowed him down and right now time was of the essence. Speaks-Truth, his wife and the tribe's medicine woman, said the sap from the Sunseal tree was the only thing that would save their young son from the fever that consumed him. Unfortunately, the nearest Sunseal trees were deep in Blood Bear territory. They typically killed all intruders on sight. Killing one of their own wasn't going to help his cause.

Even though his muscles burned, he kept running – the Sunseal grove was just ahead. He heard the peculiar whooping growl of a Blood Bear's war cry. There must be a hunting party nearby. Ten-Elk smirked and pulled out a gecko-skin talisman inscribed with glyphs for "hiding" and "concealment." It was a last minute gift from Speaks-Truth in case he needed to escape a larger force. Only problem was, Ten-Elk was not running. He almost felt sorry for his enemies. Almost. Ripping the skin in half, he began to fade away into the background of the forest. The last thing to disappear was his wolf-like smile as he drew his stone knife. The forest would be watered with blood tonight, and by morning, his son would be feeling much better.

While pointy hats and crystal-topped staves are *de rigueur* for nearly any game featuring magic, what about the beginning of magic itself? Where did magic come from? Did it just fall out of the sky one day? Or did it evolve slowly through trial and error over the years? Assuming the latter route, the first magic was probably geared toward farming, hunting, gathering, survival, and placating the "gods," rather than flashy combat magic. These new spells make use of the Ritual Path magic rules from *GURPS Monster Hunters 1: Champions*.

NEW SPELLS

These new spells especially suit campaigns set in the wilderness, uncivilized lands, or the distant past. They might also be appropriate for campaigns where the PCs are "stuck" on a strange island, planet, etc., and find they suddenly have supernatural powers . . .

Animal Call

Spell Effects: Lesser Control Energy.
Inherent Modifiers: Bestows a Bonus, Mimicry.
Greater Effects: 0 (x1).

This spell gives the subject a +5 bonus to all Mimicry skill rolls to emulate animal or bird noises (but *not* human voices). This effect lasts one hour.

Typical Casting: Lesser Control Energy (5) + Bestows a Bonus, +5 to Mimicry rolls (16) + Duration, 1 hour (3). *24 energy (24x1).*

Bewitched Basketry

Spell Effects: Lesser Control Matter.
Inherent Modifiers: Bestows a Bonus, Professional Skill (Weaver).
Greater Effects: 0 (x1).

This spell causes up to 10 lbs. of raw basket-making materials to instantly assemble themselves into a finished product of the caster's choosing. The caster *must* still roll IQ or Professional Skill (Weaver)+5 (whichever is greater).

Typical Casting: Lesser Control Matter (5) + Bestows a Bonus, +5 to Professional Skill (Weaver) rolls (16). *21 energy (21x1).*

Bless

Spell Effects: Greater Control Chance + Lesser Sense Chance.
Inherent Modifiers: None.
Greater Effects: 1 (x3).

Normally cast as a charm, this spell allows the person possessing it to immediately reroll *one* critical failure. The charm self-activates as soon as a critical failure is rolled – regardless of the charm-holder's desire.

Typical Casting: Greater Control Chance (5) + Lesser Sense Chance (2) + Lesser Control Magic (5). *36 energy (12x3).* As with Curse (below), no Duration is needed because this happens *once*.

Curse

Spell Effects: Greater Destroy Chance.
Inherent Modifiers: None.
Greater Effects: 1 (x3).

This spell curses the subject – the next successful die roll he makes becomes an automatic failure (by a margin of zero if it matters). The caster cannot choose when this takes effect.

Typical Casting: Greater Destroy Chance (5). *15 energy (5x3).*

Dowse

Spell Effects: Lesser Sense Matter.
Inherent Modifiers: None.
Greater Effects: 0 (x1).

This spell gives the caster a vision of the nearest source of drinkable water within 10 miles, and a vague impression of how to get there – e.g., "north and up" or "in a cave to the east."

To find another source of water, this spell must be cast again. At the GM's discretion, variants of this spell that find gold, oil, etc., may count as the same ritual. This spell does not affect *animated* nonliving matter such as robots, golems, and so on.

Typical Casting: Lesser Sense Matter (2) + Range, 10 miles (4). 6 energy (6x1).

Fortunate Fields

Spell Effects: Greater Control Chance.

Inherent Modifiers: Area of Effect + Bestows a Bonus, bonus to all rolls to avoid accidents, hazards, etc.

Greater Effects: 1 (x3).

This spell blesses a field (about 60 yards from one end to the other) with exceptionally good luck. It doesn't make the plants there any hardier; instead, it reduces the chances of bad luck destroying the crops. For instance, a locust swarm might avoid that specific field even if the swarm devastated nearby ones, a underground water supply might just happen to be found during a drought, and so on. This provides a +5 bonus (or the inverse, whichever is better) when determining if random accidents affect the given area.

Typical Casting: Greater Control Chance (5) + Area of Effect, 30 yards (14) + Bestows a Bonus, +5 bonus to all rolls to avoid accidents, hazards, etc. (32) + Duration, 3 months (13). 192 energy (64x3).

A Charming Transfer

As an *optional* rule, GMs might allow casters to meta-physically transfer "ownership" of charms, potions, etc. to others, thereby freeing a slot of their own. For other casters, this is a straightforward process – the charm takes up one of the other mage's conditional spell slots. For non-casters, this becomes a bit more involved – they may have a number of conditional spells equal to their Thaumatology (at default if they don't have the skill). This gives an average of three for those without any points in Thaumatology. Optionally, the GM might require a Thaumatology roll to transfer a charm from the caster to another person. For campaigns where this would be unbalancing, the GM might charge an Unusual Background to casters "gearing up" all their allies. See the box on p. B477 for guidelines on possible point costs.

Find Direction

Spell Effects: Greater Sense Chance.

Inherent Modifiers: None.

Greater Effects: 1 (x3).

This spell tells the caster the best route to a specific location within 100 miles (which must be said aloud when the spell is finished). The caster need not actually *know* the location he is trying to get to, merely its name. The GM will determine how clear the answer is based on the margin of success of the spell and how it affects the game's plot.

Typical Casting: Greater Sense Chance (2) + Range, 100 miles (6). 24 energy (8x3).

Find Shelter

Spell Effects: Greater Sense Chance.

Inherent Modifiers: None.

Greater Effects: 1 (x3).

Incredibly useful to travelers, pilgrims, and hunters, this spell locates the closest shelter within one mile of the caster, giving him a glimpse of its location and the safest path to get there. This spell does *not* tell the caster if the shelter is destroyed or becomes occupied between the spell's casting and getting there, or if it is currently occupied. Add a Lesser Sense Body effect (+6 energy) to the spell if you want to know if the refuge is occupied at the time of casting.

Typical Casting: Greater Sense Chance (2) + Range, 1 mile (2). 12 energy (4x3).

Fire Conjuring

Spell Effects: Lesser Create Energy.

Inherent Modifiers: None.

Greater Effects: 0 (x1).

This spell creates fire that lasts long enough to ignite objects with a *Resistant* burn rating or less (see *Making Things Burns*, p. B433). This only works on inanimate objects that are not being held by someone else. It is essentially a flashy way to light a campfire, torch, etc.

Typical Casting: Lesser Create Energy (6). 6 energy (6x1).

Filling Fruit

Spell Effects: Lesser Transform Matter.

Inherent Modifiers: None.

Greater Effects: 0 (x1).

This spell is cast on a freshly picked fruit, vegetable, berry, etc., weighing no more than 10 lbs. Once cast, the spell not only preserves the food but also imbues it with enough caloric energy and nutrients to take the place of an entire meal when eaten. If the GM is using the optional rules from *A Charming Transfer* (see above), it is suggested that this spell should occupy a slot of the person who will use it, not the person casting it.

Typical Casting: Lesser Strengthen Matter (3) + Lesser Transform Matter (8) + Duration, 1 week (9). 20 energy (20x1).

Harvesting Hands

Spell Effects: Lesser Control Body.

Inherent Modifiers: Area of Effect.

Greater Effects: 0 (x1).

This spell allows the caster to instantly harvest all desirable parts (fruit, flowers, leaves, etc.) from one plant. This can also be used on multiple plants of the same type that are all within 30 yards of each other. Total weight cannot exceed five tons (about the size of a typical fruiting tree or field of corn). This takes the same amount of time it would normally take to harvest the plant(s). If harvesting a given plant would take more than an hour, the GM should decide how long it *would* take and adjust the final harvested amount accordingly. The harvested materials float into nearby receptacles of the caster's choosing or on the ground in neat piles.

Typical Casting: Lesser Control Body (5) + Area of Effect, 30 yards (14) + Duration, 1 hour (3) + Subject Weight, 5 tons (6). *28 energy (28×1).*

Hunter's Benediction

Spell Effects: Lesser Control Chance ×2.

Inherent Modifiers: Bestows a Bonus, hunting/gathering rolls.

Greater Effects: 0 (×1).

This spell gives the subject a +2 bonus to *all* rolls made to hunt game, fish, forage, and so on. It also allows the subject to reroll *one* failure on a skill where a failure would cause damage (*Foraging*, p. B427). These effects last for six hours.

Typical Casting: Lesser Control Chance (5) + Lesser Control Chance (5) + Bestows a Bonus, +2 to hunting/gathering rolls (10) + Duration, 6 hours (5). *25 energy (25×1).*

Identify Plant

Spell Effects: Lesser Sense Body.

Inherent Modifiers: None.

Greater Effects: 0 (×1).

This spell reveals a full, detailed account of all of a plant's particular traits. The caster must touch the subject (which might be dangerous in itself!). If there is no way the plant could be identified in the campaign setting, the spell provides no information.

Typical Casting: Lesser Sense Body (2). *2 energy (2×1).*

Instant Fermentation

Spell Effects: Lesser Destroy Matter.

Inherent Modifiers: None.

Greater Effects: 0 (×1).

This spell artificially ages appropriate food (typically hops, honey, etc.), converting it into an alcoholic substance or otherwise changing its flavor and texture in an edible manner. If the age of the substance is required, assume each casting "ripens" the substance one month. This need not be restricted to alcohol! Cheese, hallucinogenic mushrooms, etc. might all be valid targets of this spell.

Typical Casting: Lesser Destroy Matter (5) + Duration, 1 month (11). *16 energy (16×1).*

Living Lair

Spell Effects: Greater Create Mind + Greater Create Spirit.

Inherent Modifiers: None.

Greater Effects: 2 (×5).

This spell summons a *genius loci* – a spirit of a particular place – and binds it to the will of the caster and a location of his choosing for the next week. Because it is bound to a particular place (usually a cave or other natural shelter), it cannot directly affect anything outside of it. It cannot attack the caster's enemies whether they are inside or outside that location, though if it perceived them, it could communicate this to the caster, if the caster is present. It can, however, perform menial chores such as cooking, keeping the area clean, and other such domestic tasks. It can provide information about

the surrounding area, such as the nearest location of water, if there are edible or poisonous plants nearby, and so on. It also keeps unwanted, nonsapient (IQ 6 or less), *natural* (no hybrid or magical) creatures out of the designated "lair," making the spell exceedingly useful for travelers or those setting up a temporary home.

Typical Casting: Greater Create Mind (6) + Greater Create Spirit (6) + Duration, 1 week (9). *105 energy (21×5).*

Practical magic for a primitive age.

Lure

Spell Effects: Lesser Control Mind.

Inherent Modifiers: Area of Effect.

Greater Effects: 0 (×1).

This spell draws all manner of *nonsapient* wildlife into the specified area. This allows any hunter in the region to make one *additional* skill roll in addition to the two already allowed (*Foraging*, p. B427). Thus, a hunter plying his trade in an area under the effects of this spell could make a Survival, Naturalist, and Fishing roll in a single day instead of just Survival and Fishing! Optionally, if using the more detailed *Hunting and Gathering* rules from **GURPS Low-Tech Companion 3: Daily Life and Economics** (pp. 4-8), this spell increases the local environment by a single step (from Typical to Good, from Good to Excellent, and so on). If the environment is already *Excellent*, the hunter may attempt *2d* rolls per hour!

Typical Casting: Lesser Control Mind (5) + Area of Effect, 1 mile (36). *41 energy (41×1).*

Palliative

Spell Effects: Lesser Strengthen Body.

Inherent Modifiers: Altered Traits, High Pain Threshold (Noncombat use only).

Greater Effects: 0 (×1).

This spell dulls the subject's pain receptors, but only for noncombat use, making this spell especially useful when performing first aid, removing arrows, and so on. If the subject is in any sort of immediate danger (e.g., combat), his adrenaline cancels this spell. The effects last for one day.

Typical Casting: Lesser Strengthen Body (3) + Altered Traits, High Pain Threshold (Noncombat use only, -50%) (5) + Duration, 1 day (7) + Subject Weight, 300 lbs (3). *18 energy (18×1).*

Perfect Preservation

Spell Effects: Lesser Strengthen Matter.

Inherent Modifiers: Bestows a Bonus, preservation rolls.

Greater Effects: 0 (×1).

This spell preserves up to 30 lbs. of edible material for up to one year. After that, the caster should roll the better of IQ+1, Housekeeping+5, or Cooking+5 every six months, to determine if the food spoils. If using the detailed rules for *Food Preservation* from **Low-Tech Companion 3** (p. 13), roll every *year* instead of every six months.

Typical Casting: Lesser Strengthen Matter (3) + Bestows a Bonus, +5 to preservation rolls (32) + Duration, 1 year (22) + Subject Weight, 30 lbs (1). *58 energy (58x1).*

Phantom Tiller

Spell Effects: Lesser Control Matter.
Inherent Modifiers: Area of Effect.
Greater Effects: 0 (x1).

This spell plows a field (about 60 yards from one end to the other), creating perfect furrows of earth for planting seeds. It can also be used to create shallow irrigation ditches, soften hardened ground, and so on.

Typical Casting: Lesser Control Matter (5) + Area of Effect, 30 yards (14) + Subject Weight, 1,350 tons (11). *30 energy (30x1).*

Rain Dance

Spell Effects: Greater Create Matter.
Inherent Modifiers: Area of Effect.
Greater Effects: 1 (x3).

This spell summons a rainstorm over a one-mile area. This can help offset the effects of drought, douse wildfires, and so on. The downpour lasts for an hour. Note that excessive rain can cause problems of its own.

Typical Casting: Greater Create Matter (6) + Area of Effect, 1 mile (36) + Duration, 1 hour (3). *135 energy (45x3).*

Restful Rest

Spell Effects: Lesser Restore Body.
Inherent Modifiers: None.
Greater Effects: 0 (x1).

This spell gives the recipient the equivalent of an entire night's rest (typically eight hours or whatever is normal for the subject), restoring any FP lost to missed sleep (p. B426) and effectively "resetting" his internal clock (that is, the subject's circadian rhythm).

Typical Casting: Lesser Restore Body (4) + Subject Weight, 300 lbs (3) + Duration, 8 hours (6). *13 energy (13x1).*

Revivify

Spell Effects: Greater Control Spirit + Greater Strengthen Body.
Inherent Modifiers: Altered Traits, Extra Life*.
Greater Effects: 2 (x5).

This spell returns a dead subject to life, though not without a price! If successful, subtract 25 points from the subject's point total, via losing or reducing positive traits (skills, characteristics, and advantages), gaining negative traits (disadvantages and quirks), or a combination of both. This spell is not usually resisted unless the subject would not *want* to return to life. In this case, the caster must win a Quick Contest of his Path skill vs. the higher of the subject's Will or HT.

This spell assumes the subject's body is available and has not suffered more than 10xHP worth of damage. If the body is too damaged, a separate spell must be cast to restore the body to above HPx5. Assume that a body decomposes at a rate of 2 HP per day.

Typical Casting: Greater Control Spirit (5) + Greater Strengthen Body (3) + Altered Traits, Extra Life* (25) + Subject Weight, 300 lbs (3). *180 energy (36x5).*

* Extra Life is used retroactively here, not preventively.

Sorcerous Skinner

Spell Effects: Lesser Control Matter x2.
Inherent Modifiers: Bestows a Bonus, butchering rolls.
Greater Effects: 0 (x1).

This spell is cast on a dead being (usually an animal) weighing up to 300 lbs. Once cast, this spell performs an instant field dressing, separating skin, meat, bone, innards, and so on into neat piles. To determine the quality of the dressing, roll against DX, Per, Professional Skill (Butcher)+5, or Survival+5 (whichever is greatest). If using the optional *Butchering* rules from *Low-Tech Companion 3* (p. 5), the threshold for the maximum amount of edible meat is 80%, not 70%, thanks to the precise and impossible angles of cuts this spell can achieve.

Typical Casting: Lesser Control Matter (5) + Lesser Control Matter (5) + Bestows a Bonus, +5 to butchering rolls (32) + Subject Weight, 300 lbs. (3). *45 energy (45x1).*

Stoneshaping

Spell Effects: Lesser Strengthen Matter + Lesser Transform Matter.
Inherent Modifiers: Bestows a Bonus, all rolls to shape the material into a desired object.
Greater Effects: 0 (x1).

This spell allows the caster to shape up to 10 lbs of stone (but not metal or other minerals) as if it were soft clay, helping him to create specific shapes easily. This requires a skill roll using whichever skill best fits the final product – Machinist for tools, Armoury (Melee Weapons) for knives, and so on. Regardless of the skill used, this spell gives a +4 bonus. Both of these effects last one hour. The GM might allow other variants of this spell for other materials. For instance, there might be a separate "Woodshaping" spell.

Typical Casting: Lesser Strengthen Matter (3) + Lesser Transform Matter (8) + Bestows a Bonus, +4 to all rolls to shape the material into a desired object (16) + Duration, 1 hour (3). *30 energy (30x1).*

Strengthen Weapon

Spell Effects: Lesser Strengthen Matter.
Inherent Modifiers: Bestows a Bonus, breakage rolls.
Greater Effects: 0 (x1).

This spell strengthens a weapon weighing no more than 10 lbs., giving it a -2 on all breakage rolls for the next hour. The GM should *ignore* special breakage rules for weapons like the macuahuitl (*GURPS Low-Tech*, p.59) for the duration of this spell.

Typical Casting: Lesser Strengthen Matter (3) + Bestows a Bonus, -2 on breakage rolls (2) + Duration, 1 hour (3). *8 energy (8x1).*

Summon Spirit Dog

Spell Effects: Lesser Create Spirit.
Inherent Modifiers: Area of Effect.
Greater Effects: 0 (×1).

This spell summons a “spirit dog” (or similar appropriate spirit) to watch over a specific area or person. The caster may designate up to five other people, besides himself, as “safe.” If anyone else comes within 10 yards of the designated area or person, the spirit will bark (yelp, screech, howl . . .) loudly, automatically waking anyone within 10 yards. It cannot attack. This effect lasts for the next 12 hours.

Typical Casting: Lesser Control Spirit (5) + Area of Effect, 10 yards, 6 excluded targets (11) + Duration, 12 hours (6). *22 energy (22×1).*

Totem

Spell Effects: Greater Strengthen Body.
Inherent Modifiers: Altered Traits, see below.
Greater Effects: 1 (×3).

This spell has several variations (see below), each of which is cast as a charm (usually a piece of the “totem” animal like a bit of hide or a claw). Each spell gives a specific set of traits to the target, which last for an hour.

- *Cunning of the Crow:* Per+2, Common Sense (Conscious), Intuition.
- *Endurance of the Cave Bear:* HT+4.
- *Eyes of the Eagle:* Per+2, Acute Vision+5, Enhanced Tracking 1, Telescopic Vision 3.
- *Lizard’s Renewal:* Regeneration (Regular), Very Fit.
- *Sight of the Bat:* Dark Vision, Robust Sonar, Sonar (Accessibility, Not in water).
- *Skin of the Chameleon:* Chameleon 8.
- *Speed of the Saber-Tooth:* DX+1, Basic Move+2, Enhanced Ground Move 0.5.
- *Strength of the Mammoth:* ST+4.
- *Wisdom of the Owl:* IQ+1, Eidetic Memory, Oracle.

Typical Casting: Greater Strengthen Body (3) + Lesser Control Magic (5) + Altered Traits, 40 points of packaged traits (see above) (40) + Duration, 1 hour (3). *153 energy (51×3).*

Vermin Vamoose

Spell Effects: Lesser Control Mind.
Inherent Modifiers: Area of Effect.
Greater Effects: 0 (×1).

This spell creates a mild mental befuddlement that only affects small (SM -9 or less), nonsapient creatures (IQ 6 or less), causing them to flee the affected area. These effects last for a month.

Typical Casting: Lesser Control Mind (5) + Area of Effect, 10 yards (8) + Duration, 1 month (11). *24 energy (24×1).*

Vision Quest

Spell Effects: Greater Sense Chance + Lesser Strengthen Mind.

Paleolithic Magic

Magic in the Paleolithic (or even early Bronze Age) is probably not geared toward combat. Most spells are going to be about survival. The GM who wants his setting to have Ritual Path magic should probably take a careful look at how they want magic to interact with the setting. The GM might consider making combat and other “flashy” magic Greater spell effects. Players *can* use such magic, but it’s costly and time-consuming. The GM might even extend this to all effects that *aren’t* related to survival, placating spirits, and so on. He could even make it *impossible* for certain types of spells to be cast. For instance, offensive combat magic might be expressly forbidden.

Alternately, the GM might choose to limit the level of Thaumatology available to casters, thus limiting spell’s energy. Another method to differentiate “stone age” magic from its descendent might be to switch Thaumatology for Ritual Magic. This makes magic feel more shamanistic rather than a scholarly pursuit. He could even trade grimoires for special fetish’s that contain a spirit’s essence. Mechanically, such items would work the same (same bonus, cost, and weight) but instead of appearing as books or scrolls, they would be sacred crystals, wands, and so on. The GM could combine several options. For instance, perhaps “stone age” magic uses Ritual Magic instead of Thaumatology as a core skill, and other “flashy” magic are considered Greater Effects and have fetishes instead of grimoires. A GM using a “lost world” scenario might even have higher TL casters. The “standard” Ritual Path magic casters get confused by the shiny rocks the native shamans seem to be toting around . . .

Inherent Modifiers: Bestows a Bonus, Meditation.
Greater Effects: 1 (×3).

Typically cast as a charm, usually on a bundle of objects that represent the person who is to receive the vision. The spell requires the quester to seek a place of solitude to mediate and open himself to the supernatural world. This communing requires a Will-1 or Meditation+5 (whichever is better) roll, and 15 minutes; more time can be taken for a bonus (see *Time Spent*, p. B346). Success provides an honest answer to one question. Failure also gives an answer, but it is at best cryptic and most likely unhelpful. A critical success gives an in-depth answer, while a critical failure means the GM *lies*.

Typical Casting: Greater Sense Chance (2) + Lesser Control Magic (5) + Lesser Strengthen Mind (3) + Bestows a Bonus, +5 to Meditation (16). *78 energy (26×3).*

Wishes for Fishes

Spell Effects: Lesser Strengthen Chance.
Inherent Modifiers: Bestows a Bonus, Fishing.
Greater Effects: 0 (×1).

This spell gives a +5 bonus to all Fishing rolls (regardless of the method used) for the next three hours.

Typical Casting: Lesser Strengthen Chance (3) + Bestows a Bonus, +5 to Fishing rolls (16) + Duration, 3 hours (4). *23 energy (23×1).*

LIKE A TATTOO

Magical charms are typically drawn on the surface of something breakable or easily destroyed. In fact, cave paintings might be charms left by powerful shamans in sacred places. However, what if they were drawn or even tattooed on the skin of a living being? These sorts of charms function exactly like regular charms except for the following.

- They cannot be transferred to others after their creation.

The Naming of Trees

This table can help the GM create fantastical plants and fungi on the fly. Keep in mind that the GM will still need to define what the ingredient *does*, but he can easily draw inspiration from its name. For instance, a roll of 3, 2 and 3, 1 would name a plant “Sunseal.” Its sap might be useful in making healing potions, protecting from sunburns, etc.

Roll	Name 1	Name 2
1, 1	Gold	Foil
1, 2	Winter	Leaf
1, 3	Twinkle	Hitch
1, 4	Ivory	Runner
1, 5	Moon	Root
1, 6	Black	Bulb
2, 1	Free	Rain
2, 2	Angel/Spirit	Chain/Rope
2, 3	Wonder	Sap
2, 4	Blue	Claw
2, 5	Summer	Ash
2, 6	Temple/Sacred	Hand
3, 1	Hill/Mountain/Valley	Seal
3, 2	Sun	Fen
3, 3	Star	Spinner
3, 4	Red	Bark
3, 5	Devil/Demon	Cap
3, 6	Spring	Groove
4, 1	Shimmer	Bane
4, 2	Drum	Berry
4, 3	Sky	Wine
4, 4	White	Promise
4, 5	Chief*	Flower
4, 6	Shadow	Twist
5, 1	Autumn/Fall	Glove
5, 2	Forest	Fruit
5, 3	Serpent	Cloth/Quilt
5, 4	Ocean	Moss/Lichen
5, 5	Spell	Finger
5, 6	Queen	Razor
6, 1	Deep	Cane
6, 2	Cat	Horn
6, 3	Diamond	Thorn
6, 4	Gallows	Heart
6, 5	Green	Harrow
6, 6	Shaman*	Vine

* In less primitive times, this could be another appropriate names, such as King, Emperor, Priest, or Bishop.

- They can be either drawn on (e.g., henna), inked directly into the skin (like a traditional tattoo), or even “cut” onto the skin (e.g., ritual scarring). The former disappear after use, while for the latter, after the charm is used, the physical tattoo remains but is no longer magical and appears “faded.” The tattoo can be “reused” if creating the exact same charm as before. If this is done, reduce the final required energy of the spell by 10%. The GM should feel free to vary this amount for particularly small or elaborate tattoos.

- Instead of a physical act to activate them, they require a mental one. This still takes a Ready maneuver.

- A given character may only have tattoo charms equal to his ST score (representing his mass and the amount of available drawing “surface”). Multiple tattoo charms can occupy the same space as long as they are the exact same spell, giving multiple uses. They only fade when all uses are gone.

THE MAGIC IS IN THE LEAVES

Potions usually require Alchemy to brew, but what of the first such concoctions? More than likely, the first “potion” was probably not even a liquid, but a paste or poultice. If using the optional potion-brewing rules from *Bottled Magic* in *Pyramid* #3/43: *Thaumatology III*, substitute Herb Lore for Alchemy skill and use the following modifications.

- Herb Lore uses an herbal, not a formulary. They are identical in game mechanics, but herbals cannot be used for Alchemy, and formularies cannot be used for Herb Lore.

- Because Herb Lore makes use of naturally occurring components, herbalists can make a Naturalist or Survival roll once per hour (subject to *Time Spent*, p. B346) to find ingredients. Success locates one improvised ingredient per point of success *or* one basic ingredient per 3 points of success *or* one good ingredient per 10 points of success. Critical success increases the ingredient’s quality by a step; a natural roll of 3 yields a *legendary* ingredient! Failure means the herbalist wasted his time, while a critical failure means the herbalist found what he *thought* would be a useful ingredient. The GM should feel free to count this ingredient as a quirk in the potion or have some other nasty side effect to occur, the least of which might be poisoning . . .

- Herb Lore does not use a lab but instead uses an apothecary. The statistics are identical to an alchemy lab and counts as improvised gear when making either potions or charms (*Monster Hunters 1*, p. 39).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Christopher R. Rice would make a very poor cave dweller; he needs his Internet you see. From Portsmouth, Virginia, he does the occasional gardening and whittling. He dreams of being able to write full-time one day, or at least eke out a living doing it. He wishes to thank L.A., his own personal muse, as well as the rest of his gaming group; his good friend Antoni Ten Monrós; Beth “Archangel” McCoy for her amazing patience; Emily “Bruno” Smirle; and Luke “Bunyip” Bennett, for being most excellent sound-ing boards.

RANDOM THOUGHT TABLE

THE UNKNOWNNS OF HISTORY'S PRELUDES

BY STEVEN MARSH, *PYRAMID* EDITOR

Fans of the family-targeted oversized-puppet slapstick series *Dinosaurs* who tuned in for its last episode were in for a bit of a shock. (**SPOILER ALERTS** in place for this 20-year-old episode.) In that finale, patriarch megalosaur Earl – a loveable goof firmly from the Homer Simpson/Fred Flintstone/Ralph Kramden school – sets in motion a series of events that leads to total environmental collapse and an ice age that will cause the dinosaurs' extinction. The final shot is of the dinosaur family – father, wife, grandmother, two teens, and a baby – shivering in the cold as a newscaster reports the apocalyptic news and sadly tells them, “Goodnight . . . good-bye.”

Suffice it to say that episode probably caused a number of traumatic family viewing nights.

On the one hand, that's an *exceptionally* dark way to end what had otherwise been a fairly light show. On the other hand, the name of the show was “*Dinosaurs*”; dramatic irony being what it is, we *know* how that story ultimately turns out. We may not have expected the story to go down that route, but we can't be surprised that it did. (By the same token, it's hard to feel sympathy for all those teens who gasped in surprise at the ending of *Romeo + Juliet* or *Titanic* . . .)

What does this have to do with our “prehistory” issue of *Pyramid*?

This one anecdote plays up two (seemingly contradictory) aspects of prehistoric tales that we can incorporate into our games.

WE KNOW THE ENDING . . .

To a certain extent, a lot of historical gaming gets an extra boost from the fact that we (the gaming audience) know things that the residents of the game world do not. When the captain of the *Titanic* welcomes the PCs aboard his unsinkable ship, we're counting down the minutes 'til our ice bucket gets overfilled.

The enterprising GM can toss a curve or two the heroes' way, where history doesn't pan out *quite* like expected (see the Random Thought Table installment *The Future Is a Moving Target* from *Pyramid* #3/52: *Low-Tech*). That incongruity between what we “know” – as observers/players – and what “really happened” in the story/setting can be a great mystery. However, part of the point of many historical (or *pre*-historical) introductions is that we know how the overarching story turns out. The denouement of the classic 1920s-era *Call of Cthulhu* adventure *The Masks of Nyarlathotep* relies on the players' realization that the horrors of World War II are on the horizon.

Adrian Veidt: It all worked out in the end.

*Dr. Manhattan: “In the end”? Nothing ends, Adrian.
Nothing ever ends.*

– *Watchmen* #12

The Cracks of History

Another rich way to present mindful gamers with enticing plot hooks is to look at what we don't know about an era – and make something up. For example, the artwork and artifacts that have survived from pre-historical eras must – by their nature – be of the sort that can survive umpteen-thousand years . . . limiting our lore to durable goods such as cave paintings and other constructs.

However, what if humanity's forbearers had abilities or insight that couldn't possibly survive to become archaeological records? What if the Cro-Magnon brain was exceptionally good at code-breaking or pattern-solving, if presented with the material to decipher in terms it could understand? (Maybe a prion infection or genetic mutation in the intervening millennia greatly reduced that ability.) Or perhaps they excelled at ephemeral arts – for example, cooking or improvisational storytelling.

There are many applications of “sneaking in” such elements into a campaign involving time travel or access to other eras (or proto-eras, such as the *Where the Snow Bleeds* adventure on pp. 21-25). If primitive humans or now-extinct dinosaurs have some trait or ability that we can't possibly know about in the “real” world, then it can lead to such cross-time thrills as being served dinner by a renowned thick-browed chef, or hunting a rare dinosaur whose blood is a panacea for modern ailments.

In this case, if the players encounter a tribe of friendly Neanderthals being hassled by some upstart *Homo sapiens*, then we know that – in the long run – the Neanderthals' story doesn't end too happily. It also gives some extra poignancy to those scenes where the heroes come into conflict with those who replaced them (a.k.a. “us,” give or take a million years).

In a similar way, it's entirely possible for great gaming possibilities to derive from smaller-scale outside knowledge – what is known in some circles as dramatic irony. For example, if the heroes are part of a roaming hunter-gatherer tribe (or are interacting with one) who doesn't have a good grasp of time or the whole “sex equals baby” correlation, then news that one of the tribal women has missed her cycle may be a mysterious and hectic time. How did this happen? How many cycles of the moon before we need to worry about slowing down? Sure, the *players* know what transpired and can probably plot an exact calendar, but the *tribe* doesn't . . .

. . . BUT NOT THE HEROES' STORY

SPOILER ALERT: You are going to die.

Now, even knowing the all-but-certain outcome of your own story, you probably at least have a passing interest in the journey. (As an aside, the fairy-tale “happily ever after” ending was frequently summed up as “happily until their deaths” or “and if they haven't died, they are still living today”; it was sanitized some time ago to better sell teacup rides.)

One fascinating aspect of living is that everyone's story is unique. Those who have been fortunate enough to talk with veterans of wars about their experiences have found that even those who were part of history we “know” – such as the Normandy landing, the invasion of Pearl Harbor, or other well-documented events – can still bring fascinating insight. One reason the *Great Pendragon Campaign* is so beloved is not because the players don't know what happens to King Arthur; it's because they do know what happens to him . . . and they want to find out what happens to their *own* heroes at the same time. There's also a simulationist interest: How would *my* character react during a known forthcoming event (be it the fall of dinosaurs, the extinction of Neanderthals, or anything more modern)? Finally, it's possible for the heroes to make micro or even macro deviations to known events by slipping between the “cracks of history.”

So, although the heroes approach the *Dinosaurs* series knowing full well that the titular characters are going to die – or even if the players are struggling to play prehistoric cavemen trying to fend off a likely fatal encroaching ice age – the fun comes in the journey. On a long enough timeline, we're all going to die . . . but each of our stories is unique.

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.

Knowing the Past Isn't What It Used to Be . . .

One interesting element that can be used in a prehistory campaign (or any historical game) is the gulf between what was once “known” about a topic and what we now “know.”

For example, it's taken a few decades for popular culture to catch on, but nowadays, it's generally accepted that most (or all) dinosaurs had feathers. So what happens when the heroes go back in time and discover a group of lizard-like featherless *Jurassic Park*-style dinosaurs? Is everything they know about recent evolutionary science wrong? Did these dinos come from somewhere else? (Where in the world did the architects of the events behind *GURPS Big Lizzie* get their stock from?)

As another example, it's also generally accepted that Neanderthals were sophisticated tool-users, with intellectual capabilities no worse than what fills most Internet comment threads. So what does it mean if the heroes encounter a “Thog smash!”-style caveman?

Presenting the players with events or scenarios they know to be “incorrect” (yet were once believed to be true) is a great mystery – either a metagame one or an in-setting puzzle for knowledgeable heroes to sort out.

ODDS AND ENDS

THE “MODERN” STONE-AGE FAMILY?

One trend that has at least two data points to support it – *The Flintstones* and *Dinosaurs* – is a “prehistoric” world that is a time-shifted modern-day setting. In such settings, the pre-modern citizens have all the amenities of contemporary living: television, cars, etc.*

Curiously (yet for obvious reasons), these “modern” eras tend to be stuck at a certain tech level: music is via “record players” that use a bird’s beak (rather than stony “iPods”), businesses use parrot-like Dictaphones (but no fax-machine equivalents), “phones” are boxy stone things attached to walls rather than portable mobile devices, etc.

In the “real world,” we know such settings are stuck with the tech of the era in which they were originally conceived (you can’t fault 1960s writers for not envisioning the Information Age). However, as a plot device, such ludicrous alternate timelines could be created by transporting the tech or culture of *any* era to prehistoric time.

This leads to the possibility of redefining what “modern stone-age” is for other eras. For example, what would a modern-stone-age world redirected from Victorian times be? (Stone Ouija boards, dinosaur-pulled carriages on cobblestone streets . . .) Or a modern-stone-age based on the era of a cyberpunk future? Trying to wrap your mind around what a TL(0+6) or TL(0+11) world would resemble should lead to many interesting gaming possibilities. Just step into your coconut-powered time machine . . .

* To retain your sanity, don’t ask yourself why the Flintstones celebrate Christmas.

MURPHY’S RULES

BY GREG HYLAND



ACCORDING TO THE DELPHI COUNCIL WORLDBOOK FOR TORG (West End Games), AN AUSTRALIAN ARMY SOLDIER WHO ATTEMPTS TO HIDE HIS TRACKS WILL BE EASIER TO FIND THAN IF HE HADN'T EVEN BOTHERED.

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Times were not dull for humanity in the age of stone.

– Stanley Waterloo, *The Story of Ab*

APPENDIX Z

FIRST & FOREMOST

BY JASON “PK” LEVINE

History shows us that knowledge grows within a society, from the few who first understand its truths to the masses that eventually come to accept it. But what if you go back further, before even that small core group of believers . . . back to the *first* person to realize something?

The further back in history you go, the easier it becomes to play a character with unique access to a given skill. In an early TL1 game, you could theoretically play the first person with Metallurgy. At TL0, you could be the inventor of Poetry. At any TL, you might also play the first person to discover esoteric or “impossible” skills such as Alchemy, Thaumatology, etc. Any discipline that the GM agrees could be derived by a sole creator *and* is currently unknown in the game world is a valid choice!

A FAIR COST

At lower TLs, exclusive knowledge is equivalent to access to futuristic inventions. If a caveman is the only living person with the Leadership skill, his position is similar to that of a modern inventor who’s secretly created a crowd-control gas! Thus, represent this with Unusual Background (Exclusive Skill) – analogous to Unusual Background (Invention) from p. B477 – with the following costs:

Simple: An unknown technique or perk for a commonly known skill. *5 points.*

Average: An unknown Easy or Average skill or an unknown specialization for a harder skill. *15 points.*

Complex: An unknown Hard or Very Hard skill. *30 points.*

Amazing: A small collection of related skills; e.g., Armoury, Metallurgy, and Smith. *50 points.*

This Unusual Background guarantees that the world as a whole will not discover this discipline throughout the course of the game. Considering that few campaigns will ever span more than a decade of in-game time, this shouldn’t suspend disbelief. If you’re running a game of immortals, however, the GM is obligated to have society figure things out *eventually*, at which point you can either discover a more modern, related skill, or reallocate those character points toward something else.

The GM is permitted to allow one or two important NPCs to buy the same Unusual Background (and skill), particularly to establish a rivalry. For *true* exclusivity, add Cosmic (+50%). Conversely, if anyone can learn this skill, but the world considers you the sole master of it, use the Niche Protection perk from *Pyramid* #3/44: *Alternate GURPS II* (p. 33).

Must It Be a Skill?

At the GM’s option, these rules can cover knowledge that isn’t easily represented by skills or gadgets. For example, Survival may be a widespread skill, but knowing how to use Survival to create *fire* might be Average knowledge. For one tongue-in-cheek take on Amazing knowledge, see the film *The Invention of Lying*.

DISCOVERING A NEW SKILL

What if you want to come up with an unknown skill in play? There are a few different approaches that suit different styles of play; the GM must decide which is in effect.

Invention Adaptation: Start with the rules on pp. B473-474. The GM will decide what an appropriate *related* skill is; for example, being the first person to know Tracking may require having a high Survival skill. There are rarely costs or bugs, but *Time Required* shifts up a notch: Simple takes 2d days; Average, 1d months; and Complex, 3d months. (For Amazing, figure out the time required *per skill*.) Once successful, you may buy the Unusual Background *and* put 1 point in the skill, all with unspent character points.

Self-Training: Use the rules on pp. B292-293; you must accumulate enough hours (at 400 per character point) to cover the Unusual Background *and* first point in the skill. Optionally, the GM may compromise, by letting you pay *half* of this with bonus character points and requiring only 200 hours per character point of in-game training.

Cinematic Realization: Buying the new skill requires you to critically succeed at default rolls for it: one critical success for a technique, perk, or Easy skill; two for an Average skill; four for Hard; or eight for Very Hard. (If the skill doesn’t have a default, the GM should assign an appropriately difficult one, ideally from a related skill.) Once you’ve done so, you may buy the Unusual Background *and* put one point in the skill, all with unspent character points. This suits “Eureka!” moments and campaigns that emphasize spontaneity over serious bookwork. It will be *much* easier (though more expensive), if the GM is using *GURPS Power-Ups 5: Impulse Buys!*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

As the Assistant *GURPS* Line Editor, PK Levine has access to rare knowledge – shared by a few, if not truly exclusive. He’d like to thank Steven Marsh for helpful ideas for this article and J. R. “Bob” Dobbs for everything else.

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