PYRAMID

Issue 3/63 January '14

INFINITE WORLDS II

THE POWER OF SORCERY
by Jason "PK" Levine

IGOR-1
by David L. Pulver

LORD OF YOUR OWN DOMAIN
by Christopher R. Rice

THE INFINITE AISLES
by Phil Masters

PATCHWORK
by Michele Armellini

STORMBOMB-1
by J. Edward Tremlett

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Article Colors

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Pale Blue: In This Issue
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Green: Columnist
Dark Blue: ***GURPS*** Features
Purple: Systemless Features

Cover Art
Stephen Snyder

In This Issue

How do we cram the possibilities of infinite worlds into a finite issue of *Pyramid?* It's not easy, but we're just that good. This issue braves the wilds of the cross-space continuum to deliver the cutting edge of impossible abilities and exotic new otherworldly destinations.

We begin our amazing journey by unleashing *The Power of Sorcery,* a new form of magic as detailed by Jason "PK" Levine, Paralabs researcher and author of ***GURPS Thaumatology: Ritual Path Magic.*** In addition to the rules for this advantage-based flavor of spellcasting that brings new magic to any ***GURPS*** game, you'll get a sample grimoire of 20 "spells."

Are the Infinite Worlds just too few? Now you too can become the *Lord of Your Own Domain.* Uncover the secret ***GURPS*** traits and modifiers needed to create your own inter-dimensional pocket fiefdom suitable for many campaign types. Revel in the effects of a new ***GURPS Psionic Powers*** ability, and meet a man (with ***GURPS*** stats) that the Infinity Patrol trusts to provide a quiet place to rest.

In this month's Eidetic Memory, David L. Pulver – author of ***GURPS Reign of Steel*** – provides a new pulp realm for inventor-adventurers to explore: *Igor-1.* You'll get an overview of its history, a ***GURPS*** character lens for its ultimate scientists, and two weird-science vehicles (with ***GURPS Spaceships*** stats).

Stumble into a parahistorical anomaly in retail when you shop *The Infinite Aisles.* Discovered by Phil Masters – author of ***GURPS Infinite Worlds: Britannica-6*** – this multi-timeline chain of stores can assist dimensional travelers with odd-yet-necessary gear or serve as an unreliable means of transporting adventurers to other worlds.

Where no countries have the desire to conquer others, a *Patchwork* of city-states arises. From the author of ***GURPS Locations: St. George's Cathedral,*** Michele Armellini, comes a new alternate Earth where diversity reigns above all. Learn about its unusual history, two example cities (complete with ***GURPS City Stats*** notes), and how the Infinity Patrol is reacting to their latest timeline discovery.

When it harnessed the power of the Banestorm, England became the world's only superpower. Of course, that power comes with a price, as you'll find out on *Stormbomb-1.* Not only is England keeping secrets from its citizens, but this month's Odds and Ends reveals an even more sinister threat about which everyone is unaware. (And we can't forget to tell you about the latest installment of Random Thought Table . . . or can we?)

Whether you're looking to tour the countless possibilities of alternate worlds or just seeking new material to add to your campaign, this month's issue is sure to unleash the infinite. Once again, *Pyramid* does the impossible!

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From the Editor

Suddenly . . . The Infinite Appears!

It's been a few years since our last issue devoted to ***GURPS Infinite Worlds*** (*Pyramid #3/20,* for those keeping track), so we thought it was time to dip our toes into the time stream again.

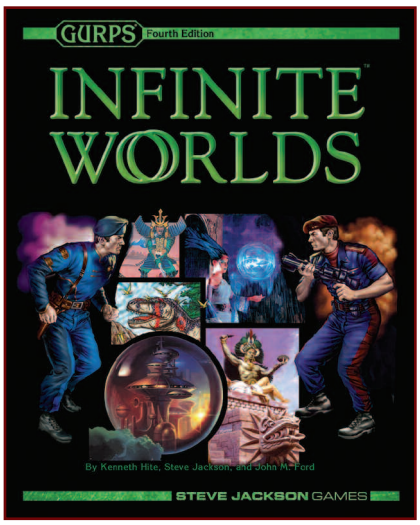
Of course, one of the great things about the Infinite Worlds setting – indeed, one of the reasons it was part of the core ***GURPS*** *Fourth Edition* ***Basic Set*** – is that it's possible to incorporate just about *anything* into the Infinite Worlds universe. (What's the point of having a game that can handle any genre, any setting if you don't let it flex its muscles every so often?) So, from a certain point of view, we've been releasing *nothing but Infinite Worlds* issues for over five years! (Okay; maybe that's a stretch . . .)

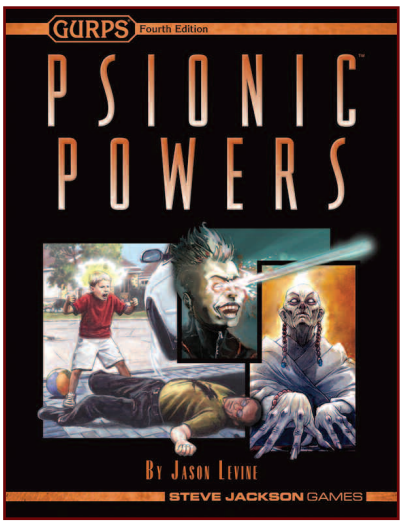
There have been many words devoted to the idea of tying different worlds into an Infinite Worlds setting. As a consideration that perhaps doesn't get as much traction: Why not have the Infinite Worlds universe visit *your* campaign? You're minding your own business in your dungeon-crawl/SF/supers setting, when strange outworldly agents (or Nazis, or cabalistic magicians . . .) show up and start spewing mayhem. The PC heroes resolve the situation and save the day – as is their wont – and continue on their merry way. If they pursue this thread, there's an entire logical framework that can explain the larger world-spanning saga they might unwittingly become part of. Or perhaps they'll just forget the whole thing (see pp. 37-38).

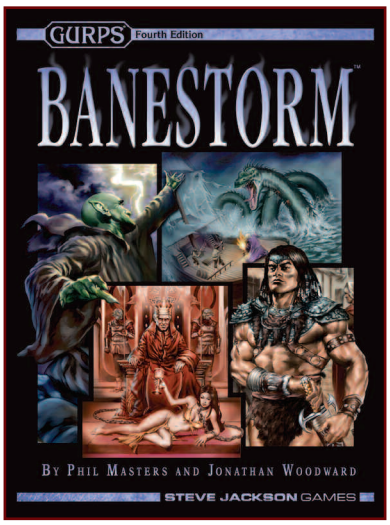
Regardless, the Infinite Worlds setting can be a useful tool to open up multigenre possibilities from both sides of the equation, whether adding new locales and options to an Infinite Worlds campaign or adding the Infinite Worlds to your location. You might just say the possibilities are infinite!

Write Here, Write Now

Speaking of infinite possibilities, how well did we tap our full potential? Did we unleash the incredible upon your unsuspecting brain, or were some of our ideas lost in space? Let us know how well these articles worked for you – and what else you'd like to see – privately at **pyramid@sjgames.com**, or publicly among other world-hopping heroes of **forums.sjgames.com**.







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The Power of Sorcery

By Jason "PK" Levine

Though Infinity's study of magic is sketchy at best (see ***GURPS Infinite Worlds,*** p. 22), Paralabs is aware that the details of spellcasting vary from timeline to timeline. In most worlds, wizards learn spells like any skill – through focused training and practice (see ***GURPS Magic***). On some, magicians call upon spirits for favors, directly manipulate the "realms" of reality, or risk accumulating dangerous levels of twisted energy (see ***GURPS Thaumatology***). But in a few, sorcerers learn *inherent magic* – spells that become a natural extension of the caster, almost as if they were an inborn talent. These sorcerers usually know fewer spells than their mage counterparts, but make up for it with sheer power and near-effortless spellcasting.

Sorcery is a new, advantage-based magic system for ***GURPS,*** using the advice from Chapter 7 of ***Thaumatology*** and balanced against other forms of magic. It can be used to add flavor to a new ***Infinite Worlds*** timeline, or it can be easily dropped into *any* ***GURPS*** game that will feature magic.

Sorcerous Traits

Introducing sorcery to a game requires discussing a few advantages. These are presented here not in alphabetical order, but arranged to best introduce the concepts behind this system.

Sorcerous Empowerment

18 points for level 1 + 9 points per additional level

All sorcerers must have this advantage; it is what *defines* them. In practice, most people refer to this advantage as "Sorcery" for short – that is, a spellcaster with Sorcerous Empowerment 10 [99] is often said to have "Sorcery 10" – but these rules will refer to it by its full name to keep the distinction between "advantage" and "system" clear.

By itself, Sorcerous Empowerment is only used to cast improvised magic (p. 6). However, it also is the prerequisite for the known spells (below) that give sorcerers their powerful edge.

Sorcerous Empowerment covers the full range of magic – anything the GM agrees is suitable for casting as a spell. It's possible to limit it, creating sorcerers who specialize only in certain *types* of magic. This affects the type of magic that can be improvised *and* the known spells that can be learned. For convenience, it's easiest to think of this in terms of the spell colleges from ***GURPS Magic;*** the default is that spells equivalent to those of *all* the colleges are available. Limiting this scope provides two variants.

Sorcerous Empowerment (Limited, Broad): You can only cast certain types of spells – the equivalent of (roughly) three colleges. Alternatively, you can think of this as four colleges with a significant restriction, or two colleges that have been expanded with extra functionality. Examples include "Limited, Elementalism" (the four elements, but with no access to elemental spirit spells), "Limited, Nature" (equivalent of Animal, Plant, and Food), and "Limited, Minds" (equivalent of Communication & Empathy and Mind Control, plus any other effect involving direct mental contact). *16 points for level 1 + 8 points per additional level.*

Sorcerous Empowerment (Limited, Narrow): You are restricted to the equivalent of *one* college, such as "Limited, Fire" or "Limited, Gate." *14 points for level 1 + 7 points per additional level.*

Under the Hood

Sorcerous Empowerment is based on a new Modular Ability (Inherent Magic), built using the guidelines in ***GURPS Powers.*** It costs 5 points base + 5 points per point of abilities, and can simulate anything the GM agrees could be cast as a spell in the setting (see *Improvisational Limits*, p. 6). The actual Sorcerous Empowerment ability is Inherent Magic (Limited, Advantages Only, -10%; Magical, -10%; Physical, +100%) [9 base + 9/point]. The lesser versions add the rough equivalent of Limited Colleges, Three (-20%), from ***GURPS Thaumatology,*** or One College Only (-40%).

Known Spells

Variable

Prerequisite: Sorcerous Empowerment.

In game terms, each known spell is bought as an alternative ability (***GURPS Powers,*** p. 11) to Sorcerous Empowerment. Thus, the *basic cost* (in points; see *Sample Grimoire: Fire Spells,* pp. 6-10, for examples) must be equal to or less than the amount paid for the spellcaster's Sorcerous Empowerment. The *actual* cost – the number of character points spent by the player – is 1/5 of this, rounded up.

Example: Rain of Fire (p. 9) has a basic cost of 15 points. As a known spell, it thus has a prerequisite of Sorcerous Empowerment 1 [18], Sorcerous Empowerment 1 (Limited, Broad) [16], *or* Sorcerous Empowerment 2 (Limited, Narrow) [21] – because these are the minimum levels of each advantage that cost at least 15 points. Regardless, the cost the player *actually* pays is 15/5=3 points.

Magery (Sorcery)

10 points/level or 5 points/level

For sorcerers, Magery is simply a power Talent, costing 10 points/level; there is no Magery 0. It is separate from other types of Magery; e.g., it does not aid ***GURPS Magic*-**style spellcasting. Magery (Sorcery) adds to any roll required to cast *or* properly use a spell. For example, it adds to Innate Attack skill to hit with a missile, to Engineering skill to brace a tunnel with magic, and so on. If the spellcaster only has *Limited* Sorcerous Empowerment (of either type), reduce the cost of Magery (Sorcery) to 5 points/level.

Unless the GM states otherwise, sorcerers may only buy up to four levels of Magery (Sorcery).

Magic Resistance

see p. B67

Magic Resistance has its normal effect on sorcerous spells. It is somewhat weaker against sorcerers, however, only because many sorcerous spells do not require a casting roll. Only *casting* rolls are penalized by Magic Resistance; it does not affect (e.g.) Innate Attack rolls to hit you.

Casting Spells

Unless otherwise stated, all spells cost 1 FP to cast and have a range of 100 yards. Missile spells have Acc 3, Range 10/100, RoF 1, Rcl 1, and are aimed using Innate Attack. *Many spells do not require a roll to cast* – a huge change from other magic systems – though resisted spells usually do. Some spells don't require a roll to *cast,* but do require some type of skill roll to gauge effectiveness (e.g., using Innate Attack to hit with a missile spell).

Spells don't require any sort of ritual, just quiet concentration – though anything aimed with Innate Attack skill requires the caster to point (Beam or Projectile), blow (Breath), or stare intently (Gaze). See *Alternative Rituals* (p. 6) for a different, optional take on FP cost and required rituals.

Each spell lists its duration. A duration of "indefinite" means it lasts as long as the sorcerer maintains it; this costs 1 FP per minute and does not require concentration unless specified. Normally, a sorcerer cannot cast further spells while maintaining an existing one; see *Simultaneous Spells* (below) for a way around this. Spells with fixed durations cannot be maintained and must be recast.

Known Spells

Known spells (pp. 4-5) are a sorcerer's true strength. However, he only has a limited number of them, as each is a unique advantage. Casting a known spell requires two Concentrate maneuvers – or just *one* if he's repeating the same spell he last cast. If the spell requires an attack roll, the second (or only) maneuver changes to Attack (or All-Out Attack, etc.) instead of Concentrate.

Simultaneous Spells

Any spell with an indefinite duration can be maintained. However, by default, a sorcerer can only focus on *one* spell at a time, which means he cannot cast or maintain another spell while doing so; all spells are mutually exclusive with each other. With the GM's permission, this limit can be raised.

For the sorcerer to be able to handle two spells at once, he has to pay full price for his most expensive known spell (pp. 4-5) *instead* of paying 1/5 cost. For three spells at once, he has to pay full price for his *two* most expensive known spells. For four, he pays for his top three, and so on. (His *other* spells remain 1/5 cost.)

Example: Darren wants to be able to keep two spells active at once, so he pays full price for his single most expensive known spell. His magical advantages are Sorcerous Empowerment 5 [54], Create Fire (two yards) [2*], Deflect Energy [49], Explosive Fireball 5 [9*], Heat 2 [7*], and Phantom Flame [5*]. (See pp. 7-9 for spell details.) He has paid 1/5 cost for the spells marked with a *, but full price for Sorcerous Empowerment and Deflect Energy. He may now cast Heat, then maintain it while throwing an Explosive Fireball at someone or improvising a new spell. Or he could cast Heat, maintain it while casting Phantom Flame, and then maintain *both* spells indefinitely – but he could not maintain both while casting a *third* spell!

Treat the sorcerer's last improvised spell (p. 6) as a known spell for these purposes. But even with this change, he cannot improvise more than one spell at a time!

Note that this upgrade does not let the sorcerer *cast* multiple spells at once – he must still cast them one at a time. Use Compartmentalized Mind to change that.

Under the Hood

This is an expansion of the normal rules for alternative abilities (***GURPS Powers,*** p. 11). Normally, a character pays for the most expensive single advantage (and 1/5 cost for the rest), and can use one advantage at a time. This can be generalized: If he pays for the most expensive X abilities (and 1/5 cost for the rest), he has access to X abilities simultaneously.

As a special effect *when applying this rule to sorcery,* the sorcerer must take the normal casting time when switching spells (instead of being able to instantly access his last X abilities), but he may invoke X instances of advantages for which he only has one copy (e.g., using Temperature Control to maintain multiple heated zones, rather than being limited to one at a time).

For more on using this rule with ***GURPS Powers: Divine Favor,*** see ***Spells, Prayers, and More*** on p. 39.

Spells cannot be cast faster than one second. There are no "blocking spells" in sorcery.

Alternative Rituals

Every spell costs 1 FP to cast. This is to add *some* resource management to sorcery, to prevent known spells from turning into superpowers. As an optional rule, the GM may instead give sorcerers more flexibility by requiring them to meet any *two* of the following three requirements when casting a spell:

1. Pay 1 FP upon casting the spell.
2. Perform obvious physical gestures, requiring some torso and leg movement and exaggerated arm movement, for the duration of the concentration. The sorcerer can meet this requirement if he is sitting (unbound) or if his legs are *chained,* but not if his legs are *clamped* in place, he is *tied* to a chair, or his arms are restrained in any way.
3. Speak an obvious ritual chant, at normal conversation levels, for the duration of the concentration. The sorcerer cannot be gagged and this makes Stealth (to be silent) impossible.

These requirements may be shifted on the fly. A sorcerer could cast the same Ignite Fire spell using gestures and chanting (to save FP) when helping a friend, then with FP and gestures (to be quiet) when later sneaking into a castle, and then again with FP and chanting (no movement) after the guards catch him and tie him up. This lets sorcerers ignore all FP costs when they don't mind being flashy, but as a downside, they lose the ability to cast spells if fully restrained and gagged.

The gestures and/or chanting make it clear to anyone with *any* awareness of how magic works that the sorcerer is casting a spell. Someone with actual magical training (even if only theoretical, such as Occultism, Thaumatology, etc.) may roll vs. an applicable skill (or IQ) as a free action to estimate what the spell will do. This roll is at -4 if the sorcerer is only gesturing *or* only chanting, or no penalty if he's doing both.

If an invented spell (p. 10) is given a higher FP cost, this rule replaces *1 FP* of that cost with the requirements above.

Example: The GM has invented a powerful spell that costs 5 FP, but he uses alternative rituals. Thus, the spell cost becomes "4 FP plus two ritual requirements." A sorcerer could pay 5 FP and gesture, pay 5 FP and chant, or pay 4 FP and gesture *and* chant.

Improvised Magic

For sorcerers, improvised magic is a last resort; the spells take longer to cast and are *significantly* weaker than their known spells. A beginning sorcerer can't improvise more than a cantrip! But the fact that improvisation is possible *at all* gives sorcerers some much-needed flexibility to offset how short their spell lists usually are.

A sorcerer can improvise a spell with a basic cost equal to his Sorcerous Empowerment level. Note that – unlike for known spells – the *level* is what matters, not the number of points spent on the advantage! In effect, the sorcerer is using his Sorcerous Empowerment level to temporarily "buy" the spell. Having a Limited variant doesn't change any of this; it just restricts the *type* of magic that you can improvise.

Examples: Ada, with Sorcerous Empowerment 1 [18], has only one point to "spend" on the basic cost of an improvised spell. She could buy something like a minimal Ignite Fire (p. 9), but nothing bigger. Bob has Sorcerous Empowerment 15 (Limited, Fire) [112], and could thus improvise anything from Ignite Fire all the way up to Rain of Fire (p. 9)!

The sorcerer can spend 25 FP to temporarily increase his effective Sorcerous Empowerment by 1, for the purpose of improvising *one* spell. (He may also spend HP; each 1 HP counts as 2 FP toward the 25 FP needed.) This bonus lasts until he improvises a different spell.

Improvising a spell requires Concentrate maneuvers equal to the basic cost of the spell plus one. (For attack spells, the *last* maneuver will instead be Attack, All-Out Attack, etc., instead of Concentrate.) For example, improvising a 1-point Ignite Fire spell takes two seconds, but improvising a 15-point Rain of Fire spell requires 16 seconds. However, once the spell has been improvised, it can be cast as quickly as a known spell (see above) until a *new* spell is improvised. In effect, a sorcerer's most recently improvised spell is treated as a "bonus" known spell.

Example: Bob improvises Rain of Fire. In combat, this takes him 16 turns; the first 15 are Concentrate maneuvers, while the 16th is an Attack to target the spell. On his 17th turn, he casts another Rain of Fire. On his 18th, he casts yet another. He then switches to casting one of his known spells, which takes two seconds (his 19th and 20th turns), then goes back to Rain of Fire, which takes two seconds (his 21st and 22nd turns).

Improvisational Limits

The GM is perfectly within rights to restrict Sorcerous Empowerment to the spells listed in an approved grimoire for the campaign. He may allow sorcerers to improvise completely new spells, but each such improvisation *must* make sense as a new, general spell for the setting. The key word here is "general"; the GM should shut down overly specific spells.

Example: Cindy has Sorcerous Empowerment 6 and needs to get inside Castle Black's walls quickly. She can improvise any spell with a basic cost up to 6, but none of the GM's premade spells quite fit. She proposes Corrosion Attack 3d (Accessibility, Only on Castle Black's south wall, -80%; Costs Fatigue, 1 FP, -5%; Magical, -10%) [6]. The GM brandishes a foam sword menacingly and suggests she reconsiders. After brief debate, they settle on Corrosion Attack 1d (Accessibility, Only on worked stone, -30%; Costs Fatigue, 1 FP, -5%; Magical, -10%) [6]. The GM records it in the setting grimoire, as the Earth spell "Mason's Bane."

Sample Grimoire: Fire Spells

The following spells are worked examples, loosely inspired by the first 20 Fire spells in ***GURPS Magic;*** they are *not* exact translations. (Some, such as Cold and Heat, are significantly changed in an attempt to broaden their utility.)

The GM should be open to sorcerers tweaking and upgrading these spells, particularly as they add further levels of Sorcerous Empowerment. As long as the sorcerer has the earned character points to pay for the upgrade, and the basic cost doesn't exceed that of Sorcerous Empowerment, he should be able to add more damage, increase the area, and so on. This should be done during downtime; assume the spell research takes a minimum of one day per character point being added to the basic cost, or *twice* as long "in the field" away from books and testing facilities.

Some of these spells use traits or modifiers from ***GURPS Powers*** or ***GURPS Power-Ups 4: Enhancements.*** Each description should provide enough information to make those books optional, however.

Cold

Basic Cost: 16 points/level.
Casting Roll: None.
Duration: Indefinite.

You may lower the temperature in an area with a radius up to 64 yards across; you may affect a smaller area if you wish. Your maximum decrease is (spell level)×20°F. This change does not happen immediately, the temperature drops gradually over the first 10 seconds of maintaining the spell. This spell never does damage *directly,* but can certainly cause indirect problems (see *Cold,* p. B430).

Statistics: Temperature Control (Area Effect, 64 yards, +250%; Costs Fatigue, 1 FP, -5%; Cold, -50%; Increased Range, 10×, +30%; Magical, -10%; Variable, Area, +5%) [16/level].

Create Fire

Basic Cost: 8 points (or more).
Casting Roll: None (Innate Attack (Gaze) to aim).
Duration: Five minutes.

You may create a patch of fire, which will burn regardless of fuel for the next five minutes. If there is fuel available, it will begin spreading immediately and will continue to burn on its own afterward.

The basic (8-point) version of this spell lets you create fire in up to a two-yard radius. Every additional 2 points doubles this radius: four yards for 10 points, eight yards for 12 points, and so on. You may always choose to affect a smaller area.

Statistics: Burning Attack 1d-1 (Area Effect, 2 yards, +50%; Extended Duration, 30×, +60%; Costs Fatigue, 1 FP, -5%; Magical, -10%; Persistent, +40%; Variable, Area, +5%) [8]. Improved versions add Area Effect (+50%/level).

Deflect Energy

Basic Cost: 49 points.
Casting Roll: None (Innate Attack (Gaze) to aim).
Duration: 30 seconds.

This "buffing" (below) spell gives the subject a deflective barrier that diverts incoming energy attacks, giving him +3 to dodge them. This provides no DR; if the Dodge roll fails, he takes full damage. It also offers no protection against physical attacks, only energy. Finally, it's only useful against *attacks* – someone trapped in a burning building can't "dodge the heat"!

Statistics: Affliction 1 (HT; Advantage, Enhanced Dodge 3 (Limited, Energy), +360%; Costs Fatigue, 1 FP, -5%; Extended Duration, 10×, +40%; Fixed Duration, +0%; Magical, -10%) [49].

Buffing

Any sorcery spell described as "buffing" uses the following rules:

- If cast on yourself or by touching a willing subject on an unarmored body part, there are no rolls required.
- At a distance, you must use Innate Attack to target the subject, with normal range penalties. If he's wearing any armor, you must target an unarmored hit location – otherwise he has to roll HT-(his DR) to be affected.
- Should the subject wish to resist for some reason, he rolls HT (with a bonus equal to his DR, if applicable) to do so.

Under the Hood

"Buffing" refers to any spell built as an Affliction without Cosmic (Irresistible attack) or Malediction. In effect, the spell is a beam attack, which must strike the subject. A willing subject can reasonably waive his HT roll, but because the attack lacks Cosmic or Malediction, DR *does* apply, hence the detailed rules above.

Explosive Fireball

Basic Cost: 9 points/level.
Casting Roll: None (Innate Attack (Projectile) to hit).
Duration: Instantaneous.

You throw a ball of fire that expands to cover an area; it is not *technically* an explosion, but the term has long since entered common use. Use Innate Attack (Projectile) to hit, applying normal range penalties, but at +4 for targeting an area. Everyone within four yards of that spot takes dice of burning damage equal to your level of this spell. The GM must determine what the maximum level available in the campaign is.

If your foe is within one yard of you, he may attempt to *parry* this attack (actually parrying your hand). If such a parry is successful, you must roll against DX to avoid dropping this at your own feet, where it detonates!

Statistics: Burning Attack (Area Effect, 4 yards, +100%; Costs Fatigue, 1 FP, -5%; Magical, -10%; Nuisance Effect, Dangerous to be parried, -5%) [9/level].

Extinguish Fire

Basic Cost: 15 points/level.
Casting Roll: IQ.
Duration: Instantaneous.

Within a radius equal to your level in this spell, all fire immediately goes out and stays out. If you can only affect part of a larger fire, you may put it out one patch at a time; there is no risk of the existing fire spreading *back* into the extinguished areas. (However, if someone starts a *new* fire, unrelated to the initial one, it may spread there.)

Statistics: Create Fire (Destruction Only, +0%; Magical, -10%; Ranged, +40%; Reduced Fatigue Cost 1, +20%) [15/level].

Fast Fire

Basic Cost: 65 points.
Casting Roll: IQ.
Duration: Indefinite.

You can make a fire (up to five yards in radius) burn more quickly. It does double damage and consumes fuel at twice the normal rate.

Statistics: Control Fire 5 (Costs Fatigue, 1 FP, -5%; Magical, -10%; Only to increase potency, -80%; Ranged, +40%) [45] + Control Fire +5 (Does not increase area, -50%; Magical, -10%; Only to increase potency, -80%; Ranged, +40%) [20].

Fireball

Basic Cost: 4 points/level.
Casting Roll: None (Innate Attack (Projectile) to hit).
Duration: Instantaneous.

You throw a ball of fire (about the size of a softball) at a single target. Use Innate Attack (Projectile) to hit, applying normal range penalties. It does burning damage with dice equal to your level of this spell. The GM must determine what the maximum level available in the campaign is.

If your foe is within one yard of you, he may attempt to *parry* this attack (actually parrying your hand). If such a parry is successful, you must roll against DX to avoid hitting *yourself* with your own fireball!

Statistics: Burning Attack (Costs Fatigue, 1 FP, -5%; Magical, -10%; Nuisance Effect, Dangerous to be parried, -5%) [4/level].

Fireproof

Basic Cost: 24 points/level.
Casting Roll: IQ.
Duration: 50 minutes.

You may target an area with a radius equal to your level in this spell. Within that area, ignition is impossible: Matches won't light, gunpowder won't explode, and so on. This does not extinguish a fire brought from outside the spell's area, though such a fire would fail to ignite anything else. This even foils magical attempts to ignite fires.

Statistics: Create Fire (Cannot destroy fires created outside of the area, -50%; Destruction Only, +0%; Extended Duration*, 300×, +100%; Magical, -10%; Persistent*, +40%; Ranged, +40%; Reduced Fatigue Cost 1, +20%) [24/level].

* While these modifiers are not normally compatible with Create, they make sense when combined with Destruction Only.

Flame Jet

Basic Cost: 5 points/level.
Casting Roll: None (Innate Attack (Beam) to hit).
Duration: One second.

A 10-yard jet of flame erupts from your hand, much like the long tongue of a flamethrower. Use Innate Attack (Beam) to hit. Don't apply range penalties; treat this as a long melee weapon rather than a ranged attack. It does burning damage with dice equal to your level of this spell. The GM must determine what the maximum level available in the campaign is.

This jet lasts until the beginning of your next turn, allowing you to parry incoming attacks with it. If a parry is successful, your jet *automatically* damages the incoming weapon or limb, much like a force sword. Though this spell cannot be maintained, if you cast it every turn, it never "flickers out" and you can continue to attack with it normally.

Statistics: Burning Attack (Costs Fatigue, 1 FP, -5%; Destructive Parry, +10%; Increased 1/2D, 2×, +5%; Jet, +0%; Magical, -10%) [5/level].

Heat

Basic Cost: 16 points/level.
Casting Roll: None.
Duration: Indefinite.

You may raise the temperature in an area with a radius up to 64 yards across; you may affect a smaller area if you wish. Your maximum increase is (spell level)×20°F. This change does not happen immediately, the temperature rises gradually over the first 10 seconds of maintaining the spell. This spell never does damage *directly,* but can certainly cause indirect problems (see *Heat,* p. B434).

Statistics: Temperature Control (Area Effect, 64 yards, +250%; Costs Fatigue, 1 FP, -5%; Heat, -50%; Increased Range, 10×, +30%; Magical, -10%; Variable, Area, +5%) [16/level].

All power is of one kind, a sharing of the nature of the world. The mind that is parallel with the laws of nature will be in the current of events, and strong with their strength.

– Ralph Waldo Emerson

Ignite Fire

Basic Cost: 1 or 3 points.
Casting Roll: None (Innate Attack (Gaze) to target improved version).
Duration: Instantaneous.

The basic (1-point) version of this spell must be cast on a subject you are holding or touching. The improved (3-point) one may be cast at a distance, using Innate Attack (Gaze) for targeting.

Consult *Making Things Burn* (p. B433) – a target rated from Super-Flammable to Resistant ignites immediately. Anything more resistant to fire *may* catch if this spell is cast repeatedly and continually. Roll 3d after every 10 seconds of continuous casting; Highly Resistant materials (including flesh) catch on a 16 or less, while Nonflammable ones catch only on a 6 or less.

This spell does no actual *damage* to the object, though it will likely take damage from the resultant fire.

Statistics: Burning Attack 3 points (Costs Fatigue, 1 FP, -5%; Incendiary, +10%; Magical, -10%; Melee Attack, Reach C, Cannot Parry -35%; No Wounding, -50%) [1]. The improved version removes Melee Attack.

Phantom Flame

Basic Cost: 22 points.
Casting Roll: None (IQ or Artist (Illusion) to fool people).
Duration: Indefinite.

You may create an illusionary fire up to two yards in radius. It looks, sounds, and feels like a fire, and items inside appear to burn, but it does not spread and the flames *hurt* but do no actual damage (or cause a shock penalty). Anyone who has reason to suspect the fire may roll a Quick Contest of Per vs. the better of your IQ or Artist (Illusion) skill; if he wins or ties, he realizes that it's fake.

Statistics: Illusion (Accessibility, Only to create fire, -50%; Costs Fatigue, 1 FP. -5%; Extended, Touch, +20%; Independence, +40%; Magical, -10%; Range limited to 100 yards, -10%) [22].

Rain of Fire

Basic Cost: 15 points (or more).
Casting Roll: None (Innate Attack (Gaze) to aim).
Duration: 30 seconds.

You cause flames to rain down upon an area. Use Innate Attack (Gaze), at +4, to center the area; see *Scatter* (p. B414) if you miss. Everyone who spends even part of their turn in the area is attacked with an effective skill of 12, modified only for their SM. Anyone hit takes 1d-1 burning damage. Victims may raise their shields as cover, at the risk of damaging them (p. B484). You may always choose (when casting) to scale back the damage or the area affected.

The basic (15-point) version of this spell lets you affect an area up to 16 yards across. Each additional doubling of area adds 2 to basic cost; the GM sets the cap on this increase, but 128 yards is the recommended maximum. For an additional +75% to cost (including any increased area), rounded up, the damage can be upgraded to 2d-2 burning. This is summarized in the table below.

Damage	*16 yards*	*32 yards*	*64 yards*	*128 yards*
1d-1	15 points	17 points	19 points	21 points
2d-2	27 points	30 points	34 points	37 points

Statistics: Burning Attack 1d-1 (Area Effect, 16 yards, +200%; Bombardment, Skill-12, -10%; Costs Fatigue, 1 FP, -5%; Extended Duration, 3×, +20%; Magical, -10%; Overhead, +30%; Persistent, +40%; Variable, +5%; Variable, Area, +5%) [15]. Improved versions add Area Effect (+50%/level) and/or improve to Burning Attack 2d-2.

Mana

All spells require mana. In *no mana* areas, spells simply cease to work. In *low mana* areas, resisted spells give the subject +3, while non-resisted spells halve all effects: damage, range, weight, etc. (The GM may have to interpret what "half effect" means for certain spells.) *Normal mana* areas use these rules as written. In *high mana* areas, halve all casting times, rounding up. In *very high mana* areas, halve all casting times *and* the sorcerer immediately recovers any FP spent on a spell – or any FP (but not HP) spent to boost an improvisation attempt (p. 6)!

Resist Cold

Basic Cost: 53 points.
Casting Roll: None (Innate Attack (Gaze) to aim).
Duration: 30 seconds.

This "buffing" (p. 7) spell gives the subject and everything he carries an extra DR 10 against any sort of FP or HP damage incurred from cold or ice, whether from a direct attack or an environmental effect.

Statistics: Affliction 1 (HT; Advantage, DR 10 (Force Field; Limited, Cold), +400%; Costs Fatigue, 1 FP, -5%; Extended Duration, 10×, +40%; Fixed Duration, +0%; Magical, -10%) [53].

Resist Fire

Basic Cost: 53 points.
Casting Roll: None (Innate Attack (Gaze) to aim).
Duration: 30 seconds.

This "buffing" (p. 7) spell gives the subject and everything he carries an extra DR 10 against any sort of FP or HP damage incurred from heat or fire (but not electricity), whether from a direct attack or an environmental effect.

Statistics: Affliction 1 (HT; Advantage, DR 10 (Force Field; Limited, Heat/Fire), +400%; Costs Fatigue, 1 FP, -5%; Extended Duration, 10×, +40%; Fixed Duration, +0%; Magical, -10%) [53].

Seek Fire

Basic Cost: 19 or 24 points.
Casting Roll: Per.
Duration: Instantaneous.

After casting, the GM rolls the sorcerer's Per, with a penalty based on the distance to the nearest fire. The basic (19-point) version of this spell takes standard range penalties. The improved (24-point) one uses long-distance modifiers. If successful, the caster knows the exact distance and direction to the fire, and may make a follow-up IQ roll (at no penalty) to learn basic details about it (e.g., "it's a campfire" or "it's lava burning in a volcano").

Statistics: Detect Fire (Costs Fatigue, 1 FP, -5%; Magical, -10%; Precise, +100%) [19]. The improved version adds Long-Range 1 (+50%).

Inventing New Spells

Sample Grimoire: Fire Spells (pp. 6-10) gives a taste of the kind of spells a sorcerer can cast, but gamers will obviously need to come up with more! The only hard-and-fast rule is that every spell needs the following two limitations. (*Exception:* If an advantage inherently costs FP, like Create, it does not need Costs Fatigue and may even call for Reduced Fatigue Cost.)

Costs Fatigue, 1 FP (-5%): At the GM's option, high-level spells could cost more than 1 FP, but one of the key concepts of sorcerers is that they are *not* as heavily limited by energy costs as standard mages are, so even world-shaking spells should generally not cost more than 10 FP. (For extremely powerful spells, consider instead limiting them with Accessibility, Limited Use, Trigger, and so on.) Known spells should be kept in check by character-point cost, not energy cost. Unless you have a very good reason to change this, stick with 1 FP.

Magical (-10%): Sorcerous spells require mana (p. 9) to function and can be countered (fully or partially) by other magic spells, Magic Resistance, Neutralize (Magic), and so on. This is in *addition* to any common-sense countermeasures, such as water putting out fire. Use Will+Magery (Sorcery) as effective "spell level" if it matters for the purpose of Contests, etc.

Perks cannot take limitations, but any spell built as a perk is understood to have the two drawbacks above, as a feature. To balance this, the GM should give the perk a little more power or versatility than it would normally have.

Past these required limitations, anything goes – as long as the GM agrees that the spell suits the setting and campaign!

Shape Fire

Basic Cost: 19 points/level.
Casting Roll: IQ.
Duration: Indefinite.

You can control the shape of a fire with an initial radius (in yards) up to your level of this spell. This even allows you to "walk" the fire, with a Move equal to your level in this spell. You cannot split the fire into multiple components – it must remain one continuous fire – but you do not have to leave it in a circular shape. After casting Shape Fire, you can maintain it without concentration, but must concentrate whenever you wish to shape or move the fire.

Statistics: Control Fire (Costs Fatigue, 1 FP, -5%; Magical, -10%; Only to shape and move, -30%; Ranged, +40%) [19/level].

Slow Fire

Basic Cost: 45 points.
Casting Roll: IQ.
Duration: Indefinite.

You can make a fire (up to five yards in radius) burn more slowly. It does half damage and consumes fuel at half the normal rate.

Statistics: Control Fire 5 (Costs Fatigue, 1 FP, -5%; Magical, -10%; Only to decrease potency, -80%; Ranged, +40%) [45].

Smoke

Basic Cost: 19 points (or more).
Casting Roll: None (Innate Attack (Gaze) to aim).
Duration: 10 seconds.

You may fill a four-yard-radius area with thick smoke. This gives -5 to all vision rolls made through it, and is unpleasant to breathe (but causes no actual ill effects). To place smoke at a distance, use Innate Attack (Gaze), with normal range penalties, but at +4 for affecting an area.

The basic (19-point) version of this spell covers a four-yard radius. For each additional 5 points, you may double this radius; e.g., eight yards for 24 points, 16 yards for 29 points, or 32 yards for 34 points. The GM must determine the maximum level allowed; 128 yards is recommended. You may always choose to affect a lesser area.

Statistics: Obscure Vision 5 (Area Effect, 4 yards, +50%; Costs Fatigue, 1 FP, -5%; Magical, -10%; Ranged, +50%; Variable, Area, +5%) [19]. Further levels add Area Effect (+50%).

Warmth

Basic Cost: 24 points.
Casting Roll: None (Innate Attack (Gaze) to aim).
Duration: 15 minutes.

This "buffing" (p. 7) spell keeps the subject warm. In game terms, it lowers the subject's threshold for *Cold* (p. B430) – which is 35°F for most humans – by (HT×5)°F. This allows an average HT 10 human to be comfortable down to -15°F (35-50).

Statistics: Affliction 1 (HT; Advantage, Temperature Tolerance 5, +50%; Costs Fatigue, 1 FP, -5%; Extended Duration, 300×, +100%; Fixed Duration, +0%; Magical, -10%) [24].

About the Author

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Lord of Your Own Domain

by Christopher R. Rice

Fiction is littered with psychics, dreamers, and sorcerers who have their own personal domains in parallel or side dimensions. These *sanctum sanctorum*s can range in size from a bedroom to a small country! Those who wish to "own" such places can use the Jumper advantage, suitably modified, to get there. These optional rules require only the ***Basic Set,*** but ***GURPS Infinite Worlds***, ***GURPS Powers***, and ***GURPS Supers*** are also helpful.

Traits

The following traits are useful for a someone with his own personal corner of reality.

Core Advantage

There are several variations of the Jumper advantage. The first two, Jumper (World) and Jumper (Time), appear in the ***Basic Set***, while the third, Jumper (Spirit), appears in ***Powers*** (pp. 57-58).

Jumper

see p. B64

The GM may allow the following variation of the Jumper advantage, especially in campaigns that feature world-jumpers.

Jumper (Pocket Dimension): You cannot travel to other worlds, but you can jump to a specific "side dimension." This offshoot of reality is either of your own creation (see *Domain*, p. 14) or is attuned to you (or vice versa). Whatever its origins, you can go there at will – with a successful roll, anyway. To shift to your pocket dimension, use the standard rules for Jumper. Each attempt costs 1 FP. Success on the IQ roll means you enter your plane. Failure means you stay in your current world and are at -5 to use this ability for the next 10 minutes. Critical failure results are up to the GM . . . but likely result in you winding up somewhere (or some*when*) else.

While in your pocket dimension, time passes normally, allowing you to regain HP or FP, reload your firearms, brew potions, and so forth. Those with Jumper (World) or Jumper (Pocket Dimension) can "hitch a ride" to your pocket dimension as per the rules for Jumper (World).

Your pocket dimension is the size of a small bedroom (or the equivalent of the best Status -2 dwelling in your campaign setting) but has no other features. It does not, for instance, have furniture, light fixtures, etc. It *does* have a breathable atmosphere and takes whatever shape you initially desire, but from that point onward is fixed. For instance, you could have a pocket dimension that actually looks like a small bedroom or a cave. To change its size, use the *Larger Size* special enhancement (p. 12).

When you want to leave your pocket dimension, make another activation roll. Success means you return to the place where you were when you initially used this ability. Failure means you go nowhere. Critical failure means you're *trapped* in your pocket dimension for 1d hours *or* you arrive as normal but your ability burns out for 1d hours.

If you travel to another time, parallel Earth, different dimension, etc., you can still access your pocket realm. *All* of your rolls to use this trait are at -2, however, until your domain "settles," which takes 1d hours from the moment you arrive in the new time/world.

Should you die, your pocket dimension disappears, ejecting any living non-native beings to the last place they were before entering the pocket dimension. Alternatively, the GM might allow the plane to exist on its own, choose a new "owner," or something similar. The special modifiers for Jumper (World) are available to you, although not all of them are meaningful in every setting. *100 points.*

Enhancement and Limitation Notes

The *Anchored* and *Special Portal* limitations (***Powers,*** p. 89) are *de rigueur* for some versions of this advantage. Some characters with Jumper (Pocket Dimension) can force others into the pocket realm; this is Affliction with a suitably modified Jumper (World) advantage. This trait includes ownership of a domain *and* the ability to enter it; if you just want to be able to visit others' pocket dimensions, use Jumper (World), adding Limited Access (***Powers,*** p. 57) if that's *all* you can do. The Matter Creation and Temporal Control enhancements (see below) are essentially modified versions of Control. The GM may disallow these enhancements entirely and require PCs to purchase Control or Create abilities modified by "Accessibility, Only in Pocket Dimension, -50%" instead.

New Special Enhancements

Access Regulation: Your pocket dimension is surrounded by the dimensional equivalent of a "firewall." Whenever anyone attempts to enter without your permission, you can roll a Quick Contest of your Will (plus any levels of Talent or Reliable) vs. your opponent's ability's controlling attribute (or his Will if he lacks one). If you win or tie, his attempt to enter fails and he cannot try again for 1d hours – if you critically succeeded, this becomes 1d *days* and he loses 1d FP! If you lose, he can enter normally; if you critically failed, you are also left reeling (mentally stunned) as he breaks through your dimensional barriers. +25%.

Gyroscopic: You do not need to make Body Sense rolls after jumping. +10%.

Faster Concentration: You can ignore part of the penalty for jumping without proper concentration. Each level (up to five) lets you ignore -2 points of penalties, effectively letting you jump with two seconds less concentration. +5%/level.

Improved: Your jump does not fail automatically on a 14 or higher; it uses the standard success rules. +10%.

Larger Size: Your pocket dimension is bigger than normal. To see how large your domain is, subtract two from the level of your enhancement, then consult the *What Cost of Living Gets You* box (p. B266). For instance, two levels of this enhancement gives a pocket dimension approximately the size of a small apartment. The GM determines the maximum level available in the campaign. +10% per level.

Malleable Physics: Your pocket universe has different physics from your native plane. It may omit one (or more), add new ones, or both. For example, a pocket universe that lacks gravity may still have momentum, and vice versa – or an otherwise mundane realm may invoke the magical Law of Similarity. If your realm violates one specific law, this costs +50%; if it violates a group of related laws, it costs +100%; if it violates *all* laws of your choosing, it is +150%. If you can selectively turn this enhancement on and off, affecting only targets of your choosing, *double* the modifier's cost. The exact effects are up to the GM, but possibilities include: "turning off" electricity; making combustion impossible (essentially stopping everything from matches through guns to car engines from working); replacing vacuum with aether; or altering gravity. In no way does this affect any internal processes of those in the domain; e.g., disabling electricity would not shut down people's neurons! This is an environmental effect, never an attack, and the GM is free to disregard physics and logic to keep it as such – after all, that's what you're doing! This enhancement is meant to represent the strange physics of certain types of fantasy dimensions.

Matter Creation: You can create non-living matter in your pocket dimension. Creating matter requires an IQ roll and 2 FP. This enhancement comes in levels, each level allows you to create any type of non-living matter you wish, up to 10 × (level squared) lbs. (for solids and liquids) or one cubic yard/level (for gases). This matter is *permanent* as long as it does not leave your pocket dimension. If taken from your pocket dimension, it disappears immediately. When creating *manufactured* goods (not bulk or raw materials), the GM may require the character to roll against any skill used to design, build, or maintain the manufactured item, to determine the product's end quality. Matter that is fully processed or consumed like food or fuel leaves nothing to disappear should it depart the pocket dimension. (Food typically takes about three days to be completely digested.) Creating matter requires total concentration; you cannot even defend yourself on a turn in which you do it. This enhancement costs +70%/level. If you can also either *destroy* matter or transform existing matter, this becomes +110%/level. If you can do all three, it's +150%/level.

Reconfigurable: Your pocket dimension can be changed after its initial creation. This is, however, difficult, time-consuming, *and* physically grueling. The process begins with an IQ roll and the expenditure of 2 HP (not FP). After that, the jumper must spend a number of hours equal to the character points invested in his Jumper (Pocket Dimension) advantage, "shaping" his domain into its new form. This time need not be consecutive but during this period, his pocket universe is inaccessible. After the requisite time, he must make an IQ roll and spend 10 FP to determine the final "quality" (that is, how closely his idea matched up to his pocket dimension's new form). Jumpers with Architecture or similar design skills may roll against them instead of their IQ. If the character fails his IQ roll by three or less, he still gets most of what he wanted but a few details are off. Failure by four or more makes no changes *and* all time, FP, and HP were wasted.

The Doctor: It's a lot to take in, isn't it? Tiny box, huge room inside; what's that about? Let me explain . . .

Rory: It's another dimension.

The Doctor: It's basically another dimen – what?

Rory: After what happened with Prisoner Zero, I've been reading up on all the latest scientific theories. FTL travel, parallel universes.

The Doctor: I like the bit when someone says, "It's bigger on the inside!" I always look forward to that.

– ***Doctor Who*** *#5.6*

Critical failure means you've created a inhospitable area (though not immediately dangerous!). This costs +50% if you can only have one design and must spend time when you wish to change it; if you can store a number of designs equal to your IQ, this costs +100% instead. You can switch "designs" with an IQ roll and a minute of concentration. If the jumper has the Matter Creation enhancement, any previously created matter within the domain can be affected during reconfiguring as long as it "matches" the new surroundings. The GM who wishes for extra complexity may treat each design as a *New Invention* (p. B473) instead. Pocket dimensions are considered a Simple invention, with larger pocket dimensions becoming increasingly complicated.

Temporal Control: You can control the flow of time in your pocket dimension, relative to the real world. This enhancement comes in levels; each level allows you to shift the flow of time, speeding it up or slowing it down. Changing the flow requires an IQ roll and 2 FP. If successful, look up this enhancement's level in the *Size* column of the *Size and Speed/Range Table* (p. B550); the number in the *Linear Measurement* column becomes the amount by which you can vary the flow of time. This lasts for as long as you concentrate and for five minutes after you stop. For example, if you have a level of this enhancement and Concentrate for five minutes, you can experience 15 minutes of subjective time. You may switch between speeding and slowing, but each switch demands a Concentrate maneuver and another IQ roll. Maintaining this requires total concentration; you cannot even defend yourself on a turn in which you do it. The GM sets the maximum level allowed. +40%/level, or +80%/level if you can selectively decide which areas are affected.

Tunnel: As for Warp's Tunnel enhancement (***Powers,*** p. 89), you can leave a tunnel behind for +40% or create one in advance for +100%. A third "level" allows you to open *multiple* tunnels; this is normally +110% and is only useful if you have a very large domain (you can open tunnels between one location in reality and anywhere in your pocket dimension). However, when combined with the Warp Jump enhancement and the advantage Warp (Tunnel, +150%; Warp Jump, +10%), this becomes a +150% enhancement that allows you to open tunnels between multiple pocket locations *and* real-world locations!

New Special Limitations

Bewildering Landscape: Your domain is confusing; perhaps it has Escher-like stairs, doors that all look the same, or just a bright glow obscuring everything. Every time *anyone* enters your domain (including you!), he must roll against Per or be dazed for minutes equal to his margin of failure. On a success, he is not dazed, but suffers a penalty on all rolls that involve judging distance in any way (including ranged combat) equal to (his margin of success)-5; thus, success by 5+ means no penalty. This penalty lasts one minute. This is a -20% limitation – but if you can control the effect selectively, it becomes a +50% enhancement!

Temporal Discrepancy: As for Temporal Control (above), but uncontrollably so. Whenever you or anyone else enters your pocket dimension, roll 1d: 1-2, time moves slower there; 3, no change; 4, reroll now and then roll again every *hour;* 5-6, time moves faster there. To determine the multiplier or divisor, roll 1d and treat it as the level of Temporal Control (e.g., rolling a 4 means time is 10× faster or slower). -25%.

Supporting Advantages

These traits are particularly useful in a pocket dimension.

Control and Create

Powers, **pp. 90-94**

A common trope for those with a pocket dimension is the ability to create matter, within their private universe. The GM might allow *any* non-living matter (any gas, liquid, or solid) as a "Very Common" category for Control, costing 30 points/level. This would allow control over *any* non-living material in your dimension.

Additionally, fiction is filled with all-powerful beings who can create *living* matter. For characters like this, use the following new enhancement.

New Special Enhancement

Vital Creation/Manipulation: Your ability can create or control living beings, if their nature falls under the aegis of your Control/Create power: Create Wood could be used to produce dryads or plant aliens, while Control Air could affect wind elementals. Using this enhancement is *taxing;* anytime you create or control a living being, you must spend an additional 2 FP beyond the usual cost of the advantage (thus, 2 FP per use for Control, and 4 FP per use for Create).

For Control, this ability is resisted by the *higher* of Will or HT, and lasts for one second only. Living creatures with an IQ of 0 (and therefore a Will of 0) automatically fail this roll. The target is aware that his body does not respond to his commands; this ability is *not* subtle. The effect lasts as long as concentrate on manipulating the victim. The GM may decide that, for beings of IQ 6 or greater, a suitably modified Mind Control, Possession, etc. is more appropriate than Control with this enhancement.

For Create, this ability allows you to make living things – usually plants or animals, though it also could be used for bacteria or other microorganisms.

This enhancement is called Vital Manipulation for the Control advantage and Vital Creation for the Create advantage. If you can only affect complex materials, this is a +0% modifier; otherwise, it is +100%. You do not need this for machines or other shaped inanimate matter (***Powers***, p. 93).

Warp

see p. B97

A common trope in fiction is the character that can teleport *anywhere*, but first has to visit his pocket dimension. This requires Warp Jump (+10%) on both advantages; Warp then also adds Accessibility, Only from Pocket Dimension (-10%) to reflect the modest effort required in preparation.

New Special Enhancement

Tunnel: If you can create multiple *simultaneous* portals, leading to different locations that form *before* you teleport, this enhancement is worth +150%.

Existing Disadvantages

When you are literally a god (at least part-time), certain disadvantages become especially appropriate.

Dependency

see p. B130

Dependency on a specific pocket dimension counts as a *rare* Dependency, if you have no ability to access it on your own, or as *occasional* if you do have such abilities. For those who have lived beyond their natural lifespan thanks to the peculiar properties of a pocket dimension (see *Temporal Control,* p. 13) or to gaining an advantage (e.g., Unaging) that keeps them from dying of old age, the *Aging* enhancement is appropriate. The following new enhancement also is suitable for anyone with a higher Appearance within his pocket dimension.

New Special Enhancement

Disfiguring: You become unnaturally hideous without the item you depend on. For each HP you lose, you also lose one level of Appearance. You cannot fall below Horrific. +20%.

Delusion

see p. B130

Two particular delusions occur frequently in those who rule their own tiny planar kingdom.

- "I am a god." People who notice your Delusion will likely try to have you incarcerated and/or call the authorities. The -3 reaction penalty affects *everyone* you meet – but only after you have informed them of your godhood. *-15 points.*
- "I'm invulnerable as long as I'm in my pocket dimension." This delusion is quite common among those with Jumper (Pocket Dimension). These characters often take needless risks in combat (not dodging a blow, taking on multiple opponents, etc.). The -1 reaction penalty affects anyone you've fought with, who sees you fight, etc. in your reality. Characters who actually *are* invulnerable in their pocket dimensions should take this delusion as a quirk instead. *-5 points.*

New Power

The GM should be cautious about adding this power to his campaign, as this ability makes people much more powerful on their home turf. Optionally, he might allow *multiple* adventurers with Jumper (Pocket Dimension) to purchase a special version of the Link enhancement that *combines* their domains into one large shared domain (compute the domains' areas and add the space together; e.g., a mansion-sized domain plus a bedroom-sized one gains another bedroom). Those with shared pocket dimensions can affect each other's domains in regards to abilities, enhancements, and so forth. If the alterations are done after character creation, this requires the Reconfigurable enhancement (pp. 12-13).

Domain

Sources: Cosmic, Divine, Magical, Moral, Nature, Psionic, Spirit, and Super.

Focus: Pocket universes.

This is the power to create your very own (albeit small) universe. Potent adepts can become virtual *gods* in their own domains. It might represent the pure power of creation (Cosmic), a gift from higher powers (Divine, Moral, Nature, or Spirit), study of particular branch of dimensional spells (Magic), or direct control over a particular dimension or its creation (Psionic or Super).

Domain Talent

10 points/level

Domain Abilities

Ally (sapient pocket universe or inhabitants), with Special Abilities (+50%) and a frequency of constantly; Alternate Form (see below)*; Clairsentience*; Control (any)*; Create (any)*; Detect (any)*; Doesn't Breathe*; Doesn't Eat or Drink*; Doesn't Sleep*; Illusion*; Jumper (Pocket Dimension); Modular Abilities with the Virtual limitation; Morph*; Patron (Sapient pocket universe), with Special Abilities (+50%); Protected Power; Regeneration*; Regrowth*; Resistant (any threat)*; Snatcher, *often* with Creation, Large Items, More Weight, and/or Permanent*; Super Luck*; Telecommunication (Telesend)*; Telekinesis*; Unaging*; Unkillable*; Visualization*; and Warp*. Abilities marked with a * have Accessibility, Only in Pocket Dimension (-50%).

The GM might permit almost *any* advantage modified with Accessibility, Only in Pocket Dimension as a Domain ability, if it suits his campaign.

Afflictions, Binding, and Innate Attacks also are available. They can take any form and have any modifier, but *must* take Accessibility, Only in Pocket Dimension (-50%). Alternate Form may be anything the GM permits; one common trope is for characters to be "better" versions of themselves, but *only* in their pocket universes. For such Alternate Forms the GM decides what traits are available. Furthermore, the GM may allow inhabitants of the pocket universe as Allies with Minion and either Summonable or Accessibility, Only in Pocket Dimension (-50%).

Power Modifier: Domain. The advantage belongs to the Domain power. This modifier is usually Cosmic (+50%), Divine (-10%), Magical (-10%), Moral (-20%), Nature (-20%), Psionic (-10%), Spirit (-25%), or Super (-10%).

New Psionic Powers

The following new psionic Teleportation ability uses the framework from ***GURPS Psionic Powers.***

Psi-Realm

65/90/110/130/150/180/200/220/235/265/275 points for levels 1-11*†

Skill: Psi-Realm (IQ/Hard).

You have, through force of will or luck, claimed or created a "pocket dimension," or *psi-realm*. The psi-realm is outside of reality, but you can access it by concentrating for a certain *activation time* (see the table on p. 15), making a skill roll, and spending 1 FP. If successful, you bring yourself (and equipment up to your No Encumbrance limit) to your psi-realm. If you fail, you stay where you are. On a critical failure (in addition to any other effects), you wind up somewhere else (GM's call)! Repeated attempts (***GURPS Psionic Powers***, p. 6) for Psi-Realm are at an *extra* -5 . While in your psi-realm, time passes normally, allowing you to regain HP or FP, reload your firearms, and so forth.

To return to where you came from, make another skill roll. Success means you reappear at the exact spot you jumped from. Failure means you go nowhere. Critical failure means you're *trapped* in your pocket dimension for 1d hours *or* you arrive normally but your ability burns out for 1d hours. If you somehow shift worlds or times, you can still access your psi-realm but all skill rolls are at -2 until the realm becomes in sync with your new reality. This takes 1d hours.

At level 5 and above, you can jump with less concentration time, but you are at -1 to skill for every second you skip. At level 6, you no longer have to spend FP to use your ability. At level 10 or higher, you can use this ability as a free action.

At level 1, your psi-realm is the size of a small bedroom and empty of all but breathable air; it takes the shape of whatever you initially desired but is fixed from then onward. Each level after the first increases the size (see below), which corresponds to a level of Status. For example, if you have Psi-Realm 1, it could look like a small bedroom, a cave, or the inside of a bank vault. It *does* retain whatever you bring there (via the Bulk Compensation or Tunneling techniques described below, for example) so with enough time you could theoretically furnish your realm. The GM decides what happens to your psi-realm should you die.

Level	*Activation Time*	*Size‡*
1	10 minutes	Status -2 dwelling
2	70 seconds	Status -1 dwelling
3	40 seconds	Status 0 dwelling
4	20 seconds	Status 1 dwelling
5	10 seconds	Status 2 dwelling
6	10 seconds	Status 3 dwelling
7	6 seconds	Status 4 dwelling
8	2 seconds	Status 5 dwelling
9	1 second	Status 6 dwelling
10	Instantaneous	Status 7 dwelling
11	Instantaneous	Status 8 dwelling

Don't do anything in Limbo, I wouldn't do!

– Illyana Rasputina, in ***New Mutants*** *#1.55*

Statistics: Jumper (Pocket Dimension; Gyroscopic, +10%; Immediate Preparation Required, 10 minutes, -45%; Improved, +10%; Teleportation, -10%) [65]. Further levels reduce Immediate Preparation Required to 1 minute and add Larger Size 1 [90], then replace Immediate Preparation Required with Takes Extra Time 2 and raise Larger Size to 2 [110], then reduce Takes Extra Time to 1 and raise Larger Size to 3 [130], then remove Takes Extra Time and raise Larger Size to 4 [150], then add Reduced Fatigue Cost 1 and raise Larger Size to 5 [180], then add Faster Concentration 2 and raise Larger Size to 6 [200], then raise Faster Concentration to 5 and Larger Size to 7 [220], then raise Faster Concentration to 5 and Larger Size to 8 [235], then add Reduced Time 1 and raise Larger Size to 9 [265], and then raise Larger Size to 10 [275].

* There are two variants of this ability. The first, Dream-Realm, changes the power modifier from "Teleportation, -10%" to "Dream Control, -10%"; the second, Astral-Realm, changes the power modifier from "Teleportation, -10%" to "Astral Projection, -10%." As a Dream Control power, it represents the psi's private "dream sphere," which he can jump to with ease. As an Astral Projection power, it represents a psi's ability to enter a portion of the astral plane that he has total control over. Both variants do *not* project the psi's mind into another plane – he travels there *bodily*. This can have its own benefits and drawbacks. Game mechanics-wise, all three abilities are identical.

† The GM may allow further levels of Psi-Realm for 10 points per additional level. Each level only increases the size of the domain; the GM will need to extrapolate what a Status 9+ dwelling looks like.

‡ See *What Cost of Living Gets You* (p. B266). For campaigns with different levels of Status or set in different genres, assume each level gives the *best* dwelling possible at that Status level.

Bulk Compensation

Hard

Default: Varies; cannot exceed Psi-Realm.

As for the Autoteleport technique (***Psionic Powers*** p. 68).

Chronal Authority

Hard

Default: Psi-Realm-4; cannot exceed Psi-Realm.

You can control the flow of time within your pocket universe, making it flow up to 3× faster or slower than the outside world. For an additional -4 (which can be bought off), you can selectively control which areas in your domain are affected. This psi technique requires an additional 2 FP (for a base cost of 4 FP) *and* total concentration; you may not even defend yourself.

The GM may allow more powerful versions of this technique. If so, every further -4 shifts time one step further on the ***Size and Speed/Range Table,*** per Temporal Control (p. 13). Double the penalty for selective control.

Creation

Hard

Default: Psi-Realm-7; cannot exceed Psi-Realm.

You can draw on bits of your psi-realm, forming it into 10 lbs. of any non-living matter of your choosing (for liquid or solid matter) or enough of it to fill a one-yard hex (for gas). Matter created in this way is permanent as long as you don't take it out of your psi-realm. When creating *manufactured* goods (not bulk or raw materials), the GM may require a roll against the skill used to design, build, or maintain the manufactured item to determine the product's end quality. Matter that is fully processed (e.g., food) leaves nothing to disappear should it depart the pocket dimension. You also can create pieces of larger objects to be assembled. For instance, you could create a chair one piece (up to 10 lbs.) at a time and then assemble it. For an additional -4 (which may not be bought off), you may instead destroy matter or transform existing matter.

This psi technique requires an additional 2 FP (for a base cost of 4 FP) *and* total concentration; you may not even defend yourself.

The GM may allow more powerful "uber-technique" versions of this. If so, a default of -14 (or a total of -22 to destroy or transform) lets you make 40 lbs.; for -21 (or -33), you can create 90 lbs.; for -28 (or -44), you can create 160 lbs.; and so on.

Dimensional Firewall

Hard

Default: Psi-Realm-3; cannot exceed Psi-Realm.

Whenever anyone tries to enter your psi-realm without permission, roll a Quick Contest of skill vs. the intruder's Will or ability's roll. See *Access Regulation* (p. 12) for the effects of victory or loss.

Escherscape

Hard

Default: Psi-Realm-5; cannot exceed Psi-Realm.

You can temporarily make your pocket dimension confusing. The specific weirdness can vary greatly; regardless, anyone entering your realm without your explicit permission must make a Per roll or suffer the effects of Bewildering Landscape (p. 13).

Teleport-Jump

Hard

Default: Psi-Realm-2; cannot exceed Psi-Realm.

This technique allows you to use Autoteleport or Exoteleport when you jump to or from your pocket dimension. Thus, you can appear anywhere within your pocket dimension or the "real" world. When jumping from your pocket dimension to the real world, treat the place you originally jumped from as your starting location for Autoteleport.

Tunneling

Hard

Default: Psi-Realm-4; cannot exceed Psi-Realm.

You may leave a tunnel behind after you jump. It lingers for 3d seconds and is very obvious. Anyone who wishes may pass through it to follow you. This can be a quick and easy way to take your friends with you, but it also allows any nearby enemies to do the same! You cannot close the tunnel early or filter who is allowed through. For an additional -6 (which can be bought off), you may open such a tunnel *without* first teleporting; if so, you can choose whether to pass through it, just like anyone else. For a *further* -1 (which can be bought off), you can have any number of tunnels open at the same time.

Campaigns

From the demon summoner's dark sanctum in a hell-adjacent demiplane to the psychic kid whose steadfast belief in another world leads to one of his own creation, the pocket dimension can be found in nearly any genre. Campaigns using pocket dimensions need careful thought. The GM should balance adventures cautiously. Too much focus on jumpers' domains (where they are in control and are virtual gods) or too little focus (thrusting them into the real world where they may not be so capable) will result in adventurers that lack fun for one or another portion of the group. Instead, The GM should allow PCs with Jumper (Pocket Dimension) to use their ability in clever and creative ways. After all, they undoubtedly spent a good chunk of their points on it. The investigators need a safe place to hole up for a few days? Let the jumper bring them along to his own private safe house. The heroes have been entrusted with several junior wizards to mentor – what better place to teach magic than in a hidden pocket dimension with hundreds of acres of land and a castle all to themselves?

Listen to me, John. You have their power. You can make things happen by will alone. They call it "Tuning." That is how they make the buildings change. Just now you acted out of self-defense, a reflex. But I can teach you to control your power consciously. Let me help you, John. Together we can stop them; we can take the city back.

– Dr. Daniel Schreber, in ***Dark City***

The following is specific advice for given campaign settings.

Banestorm: Given that Yrth is a "quantum sargasso," dimensional abilities might not be entirely appropriate. Despite this, powerful wizards might have mastered arcane secrets allowing them to "pinch" realty to mold it to their liking.

Dungeon Fantasy: This trait is inappropriate for most ***Dungeon Fantasy*** campaigns for the same reason Warp is. If the GM offers the Jumper (Pocket Dimension) trait at all, he should limit it to select occupations, such as clerics, druids, holy warriors, and shamans (a gift from their higher powers); mentalists (because, well, *mind* powers); and scholars and wizards (thanks to their arcane studies). ***Dungeon Fantasy*** jumpers should be allowed to stay in town for nothing more than the cost of rations. Certain enhancements also will make specific tasks easier. For instance, a wizard with Jumper (Pocket Dimension) and the Temporal Control enhancement could brew potions faster between adventures. If heroes can only access their pocket dimensions *between* adventures, this is a limitation worth -50%.

Infinite Worlds: Many of the factions active in the Infinite Worlds setting (especially the Patrol and the Cabal) can make use of those with Jumper (Pocket Dimension). Jumpers' pocket dimensions share the same quanta as their owner.

Characters with one form of Jumper are advised to take Jumper (Pocket Dimension) as an alternative ability to reduce the cost. The "gods" of the hell world dubbed Madland (***Infinite Worlds***, p. 130) could very well have this advantage, with hundreds of character points' worth of enhancements . . .

Monster Hunters: Given the starting power level of most champions, having a 100-point ability that gives a safe haven and place to regroup where the monsters can't get them might be attractive. That said, only psis, sages, techies, and witches should have access to it. The GM should *definitely* consider allowing spirit beings (ghosts, demons, etc.) to have a version of it, if only to represent their potent spiritual powers.

Adventure Seeds

Pocket dimensions could be the focus of an adventure in nearly any sort of campaign. Historical or fantasy campaigns might treat jumpers as powerful archmagi or demigods. Modern campaigns might have investigators who anchor their pocket dimensions in physical portals in their homes. In the future, everyone might possess their own tiny universe . . .

Get Porter: Jacobi Porter is a small-time thief who has gotten himself mixed up in something much bigger than himself. After the theft of a priceless Babylonian artifact, he starts having strange dreams and is eventually drawn into another world. Realizing he can control reality, but only within that other dimension, he seeks to envelop the entire population of the city and rule it like a god. The only people that can stop him are the PCs, but several portions of the city are already a part of his domain, making things much more difficult. If the PCs can't defeat Porter, will he stop at the city lines – or go further?

Hotel ∞: Walter "Wally" Tierney (see below) runs the Hotel Infinity (stylized as ∞), a shiftrealm (***Infinite Worlds***, p. 79) that is somehow under his direct control. A place to stay can always be found at Hotel ∞, due to the endless hallways, rooms, and corridors. Moreover, the hotel can accommodate even the strangest of life forms with the most stringent of needs. It has an endless assortment of indoor pools, exercise rooms, climbing walls, and so forth. Although Tierney has a veritable army of staff on hand to take care of the day-to-day operations, he prefers to run the hotel bar with his wife, the beautiful (and deadly), Magdalena "Mad Beth" Macbeth. She is fiercely loyal to her husband and has a soft spot for children and those with no place to go. She also keeps patrons from groping her at force-sword point if necessary, a weapon that she wields with deadly efficiency and grace. While the hotel has no ties to any of the factions in the Infinite Worlds setting (all are welcome there), Tierney *does* tend to come to the rescue of stranded Patrol members. Moreover, he really only has one rule: No fighting. Any violence in his establishment means the offender is ejected into the nearest parallel dimension.

The Crying Child: When the PCs stumble across the salvage of a lifetime, they cannot wait to don their vacc suits and clamber aboard the rotting hulk of a spaceship. But once aboard, strange things start happening. Airlocks mysteriously open, computer screens glitch and become static-filled, only to flash the face of someone screaming for a few seconds before going back to normal. Worse, the sound of a crying child can be heard coming from all over, even in areas with damaged intercoms. Will the PCs stick it out and discover who the crying child is – or abandon the ghostly ship as quickly as possible?

The Tower of the Mad Mage: Every year, a villager disappears into the remains of a local wizard's tower, called there by some supernatural force. Locals whisper of a tower hidden by magic *inside* the ruins. Can the PCs discover who is taking the villagers? Better yet, can they stop it? Inside the tower, at its very center, lies a powerful insane mage who has mastered all manner of dimensional magic. Check out ***GURPS Locations: The Tower of Octavius*** for ideas on how a wizard tower might be laid out.

Sample Character

The following character is meant for a ***Infinite Worlds*** setting, but can easily be ported into any world-hopping campaign.

Walter "Wally" Tierney

3,020 points

Not much is known about Walter "Wally" Tierney before the Patrol encountered him. He's in his early 40s, stocky, brown-haired with white at the temples. He has sparkling brown eyes, big rough hands, and a mischievous smirk. He tends to wear flannel, long-sleeved shirts and jeans. His easy manner and soft speech belay a sharp wit and keen intelligence. Many Patrolmen describe him as looking like a "favorite uncle."

Walter always ends up where he is needed, his sentient pocket dimension (he calls it "Finny") makes sure of that. With the particular combination of traits he has, he can jump to other worlds easily, teleport anywhere on that world, *and* bring his hotel with him. The hotel itself is the size of a small country. His Domain power (p. 14) has the Psionic modifier.

Walter was originally a latent psi, but when he took ownership of the hotel, it fully awakened his dormant abilities. Walter's origins are intentionally kept obscure, but he could be an outcast Swagman, rogue cabalist, or even ex-Patrolman. Whatever his origins, he often takes in those who have nowhere to go, giving them homes and jobs in the hotel.

ST 12 [20]; **DX** 12 [40]; **IQ** 15 [100]; **HT** 12 [20].
Damage 1d-1/1d+2; BL 29 lbs.; HP 13 [2]; Will 20 [25]; Per 16 [5]; FP 13 [3].
Basic Speed 6.00 [0]; Basic Move 6 [0]; Dodge 10*; Parry 11* (Knife).
5'11"; 180 lbs.

Social Background

TL: 8 [0].
CF: Homeline [0].
Languages: Anglish (Native) [4]; English (Native) [0]; French (Native) [4]; Strine (Native) [4].

Advantages

Ally (Magdalena "Mad Beth" Macbeth; Built on 50%; 15 or less) [6]; Appearance (Attractive) [4]; Charisma 1 [5]; Combat Reflexes [15]; Contact Group (Hotel Staff; Hospitality Service skills-12; Constantly Available; Completely Reliable) [60]; Cultural Adaptability [10]; Domain Talent 2 [20]; Energy Reserve 15 (Psionic) [45]; ESP Talent 1 [5]; Indomitable [15]; Language Talent [10]; Photographic Memory [10]; Special Rapport ("Finny," the Hotel Infinity) [5]; Special Rapport (Magdalena "Mad Beth" Macbeth) [5]; Status 1 [0†]; Teleportation Talent 2 [10]; Unfazeable [15]; Wealth (Filthy Rich) [50].

Domain Abilities: Extra Life (Domain, -10%) [23]; Patron ("Finny," the Hotel Infinity; Built on at least twice the character's points; Constantly Available; Accessibility, Only in Pocket Dimension, -50%; Domain, -10%; Special Abilities, +50%) [54]; Protected Power (Domain, -10%) [5]; Jumper (Pocket Dimension; Access Regulation, +25%; Based on Will, Own Roll, +20%; Bewildering Landscape, +50%; Domain, -10%; Extra Carrying Capacity, Extra-Heavy, +50%; Faster Concentration 5, +25%; Improved, +10%; Larger Size 10, +100%; Matter Creation 2, Can destroy and transform, +300%; Mental Carrying Capacity, +20%; Reconfigurable, +100%; Reduced Fatigue Cost 1, +20%; Reliable 5, +25%; Temporal Control 5, Selective, +400%; Tunnel, +150%; Warp Jump, +10%) [1,395]; Telekinesis 20 (Accessibility, Only in Pocket Dimension, -50%; Domain, -10%) [40]; Unaging (Accessibility, Only in Pocket Dimension, -50%; Domain, -10%; Halt Aging, Weekly contact, 1 person, +80%) [18]; Unusual Background (Omnilingual‡; Accessibility, Only in Pocket Dimension, -50%; Cosmic, Universal translator, +50%; Domain, -10%) [36]; Wild Talent 2 (Accessibility, Only in Pocket Dimension, -50%; Domain, -10%; Retention (Unreliable 11, -20%), +16%; Wild Ability, +50%) [43].

ESP Abilities: See Invisible (Quantum Flows; ESP, -10%; Paralocator, +30%) [18].

Teleportation Abilities: Jumper (World; Based on Will, Own Roll, +20%; Extra Carrying Capacity, Extra-Heavy, +50%; Faster Concentration 5, +25%; Improved, +10%; Mental Carrying Capacity, +20%; New Worlds, +50%; Reliable 5, +25%; Teleportation, -10%; Tracking, +20%; Tunnel, +150%; Warp Jump, +10%) [470]; Warp (Accessibility, Must visit pocket dimension first, -10%; Based on Will, Own Roll, +20%; Blind, +50%; Extra Carrying Capacity, Extra-Heavy, +50%; Mental Carrying Capacity, +20%; Reliable 5, +25%; Teleportation, -10%; Tunnel, +150%; Warp Jump, +10%) [405].

Perks: Alcohol Tolerance; Improvised Weapons (Kitchenware)§; Intuitive Repairman (Hotel Infinity)¶; No Hangover; Soft-Spoken**. [5]

Disadvantages

Chummy [-5]; Code of Honor (Personal) [-5]; Curious (12) [-5]; Dependency (Pocket Dimension; Weekly; Aging, +30%; Domain, -10%) [-48]; Intolerance (Anyone who breaks his rules) [-5]; Sense of Duty (Patrons and staff) [-10]; Stubbornness [-5]; Vow (Marriage Vows) [-5]; Weirdness Magnet [-15]; Xenophilia (12) [-10].

Quirks: Always cleaning *something*; Always ends up where he's needed; Broadminded; Dotes on his wife; Likes the Infinity Patrol. [-5]

Skills

Accounting (H) IQ-2 [1]-13; Axe/Mace (A) DX [2]-12; Body Language (A) Per [2]-16; Brawling (E) DX+2 [4]-14; Broadsword (A) DX [2]-12; Carousing (E) HT+1 [2]-13; Climbing (A) DX [2]-12; Connoisseur (Food) (A) IQ [2]-15; Connoisseur (Spirits) (A) IQ [2]-15; Connoisseur (Wine) (A) IQ [2]-15; Cooking (A) IQ+1 [4]-16; Detect Lies (H) Per [4]-16; Diplomacy (H) IQ+1 [8]-16; Fast-Draw (Knife) (E) DX+2 [2]-14*; Fast-Talk (A) IQ [2]-15; Filch (A) DX [2]-12; First Aid (E) IQ+1 [2]-16; Gambling (A) IQ [2]-15; Guns/TL8 (Pistol) (E) DX+2 [4]-14; Hidden Lore (Confidence Games) (A) IQ-1 [1]-14; Hidden Lore (Gates) (A) IQ [2]-15; Hidden Lore (Psis) (A) IQ-1 [1]-14; Housekeeping (E) IQ+1 [2]-16; Intimidation (A) Will [2]-20; Knife (E) DX+2 [4]-14; Merchant (A) IQ [2]-15; Observation (A) Per [2]-16; Occultism (A) IQ [2]-15; Professional Skill (Bartender) (A) IQ+5 [20]-20; Professional Skill (Brewer) (A) IQ [2]-15; Professional Skill (Distiller) (A) IQ [2]-15; Scrounging (E) Per [1]-16; Sleight of Hand (H) DX [4]-12; Stealth (A) DX [2]-12; Urban Survival (A) Per-1 [1]-15; Wrestling (A) DX+2 [8]-14.

* Includes +1 from Combat Reflexes.

† Includes +1 from Wealth.

‡ Allows him to understand any human language, even those he'd have no way of knowing (e.g., secret or undiscovered ones). See *Pyramid #3/54: Social Engineering* (p. 29) for more details.

§ Lets him wield ordinary kitchen tools without skill or damage penalties; e.g., a broomstick as a staff, a carving knife as a large knife, or a frying pan as a small mace. See ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 10: Taverns*** (p. 8) for more details.

¶ Allows him to make common, standard repairs to his hotel using IQ.

** Gives him +1 to Intimidation when shouting loudly would help, even if he isn't actually doing so. See ***GURPS Social Engineering*** (p. 79) for more details.

About the Author

Christopher R. Rice lives in his own little world – it even has a name, but he's not telling; them's the breaks. From Portsmouth, Virginia, 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, Emily "Bruno" Smirle, and Kalminos (a.k.a. Kael) for being most excellent sounding boards, and Beth "Archangel" McCoy for her amazing patience (and evil snark).

Now, since the pocket universe exists in inter-dimensional space, many of the usual laws of physics won't apply. And there are few places on Earth where two plus two does not equal four. And this is one of them. It can be quite disturbing.

– Walter Bishop, in ***Fringe*** *#5.6*

Eidetic Memory

Igor-1

by David L. Pulver

I developed Igor-1 right after finishing the revision of the Infinite Worlds setting for ***GURPS Basic Set,*** Fourth Edition. My goal was a new pulp setting to visit, but one that actually had its seeds in the background details for some weird characters who had appeared in bit parts in an earlier modern-day pulp-action horror game: a mad Nazi scientist and a Polish "Captain Nemo of the skies." It seemed natural to create a world that would explore their origin stories and let players create similar pulp inventor characters within the 1940s.

Worldline

In 1935, Professor Willis Umbramore of Cambridge (in England) developed the Transcranial Electrocognitive Stimulation Machine. It used a tiny pulse of direct current to stimulate precise regions of the brain, in particular the parietal lobes, responsible for reading, writing, and numeracy. The current induced the production of chemicals that cause brain cells to develop or change, causing the type of structural alteration ("neural plasticity") essential to learning.

Dr. Umbramore's first subject was Ignor Ruskov, a mentally handicapped janitor at his laboratory. The improvement in Ruskov's mental facilities after a regime of transcranial stimulation was so great that, within six months, he joined Umbramore as a research assistant and was working toward his own degree in electrical engineering. The next step was to test it on subjects of normal or superior intellect. To ensure a diversity of samples and research the correlation of native language to intelligence, Umbramore recruited subjects from many different nations (though most were foreign university students attending Cambridge in the fields of engineering, physics, chemistry, and math).

His results exceeded his wildest expectations: 54% of the subjects experienced an explosive growth in mental talent. The professor coined the term "ubercognitive spike," which Igor Ruskov shortened to ubercog (and the cognitive stimulus machine itself to ubermachine). Even before the experiment ran its course, many of the young students had exceeded their professors. A two-man team of ubercog engineering students from Germany and France invented a machine that generated sounds so pure that they could shatter the crystalline structure of metal the way an opera singer could break glass. A Scottish ubercog offered as his dissertation a succinct 100-page proof of Fermat's Last Theorem, a mathematical puzzle hitherto thought all but unsolvable. A Polish student made startling process toward the unification of gravitational and electromagnetic theory, and worked on plans for a device that would test it.

But there was a serpent in the garden. As the subjects grew more brilliant, they also grew less stable. Some became jealous or paranoid of rivals; others began to talk of vast plans to revolutionize science and change the world, or suffered bouts of depression. The co-inventors of the vibration ray, as but one example, accused each other of plotting to steal credit for it. When Jacques Martel, in a fit of rage, vibrated his lab partner Gustav Neitmanner's motorcycle to pieces, the hot-tempered German drew a Walther pocket pistol and shot his rival dead. As police constables rushed to the scene, Neitmanner used a modification of the device to cause a vibratory chain reaction that collapsed the electrical engineering building. Among the casualties was Professor Umbramore, crushed while futility trying to shield his precious ubermachine from the collapsing ceiling.

At the funeral, a grieving Igor Ruskov gave his patron's eulogy: "Dr. Umbramore changed our lives. He wanted to change the world."

Yet it was changing already. It was 1936, and the clouds of war were gathering in Europe and Asia. The dictatorships of Hitler, Mussolini, and Tojo began to pick off vulnerable nations, while the democracies dithered and Stalin played both sides.

With tensions rising, many of the foreign-born ubercogs (a half dozen were British subjects, or chose to stay) returned home to help their countries. Many believed that with their unique minds, they had the power to prevent the coming World War – or to win it.

Snapshots: Events

1936-1938: The ubercogs' intelligence and ambitious drive lead many to finish their degrees and find positions in premier universities, scientific research institutes, government, or private industry. Few outside their own ranks appreciate their abilities.

1939: Germany invades Poland. World War II begins. Poland falls to the Nazis, but ubercog inventor Jerzy Strakis completes his experimental anti-gravity machine just in time and levitates the Polish royal castle and government-in-exile to safety.

1940: The escape of Strakis convinces world powers to devote resources to rounding up ubercogs and enlisting them (by force if necessary) in research establishments. Some cooperate (if they are allowed to run things); others are forced into service. For example, Belgian pacifist Lavinia Saint-Pierre is captured after the Nazis overrun Belgium. She is tortured into modifying her mental translator device – which she had hoped would bridge the gap between nations – into a mind probe "extractor" for Gestapo interrogations.

1941: Dr. Gustav Neitmanner, now a card-carrying Nazi Party member, demonstrates a semi-portable version of his vibration ray in front of Himmler, Hitler, and Goering, and vibrates a Panzer I tank apart. He is rewarded with a laboratory and a giant research budget, but his violent temper and the inability of "lesser minds" to understand his theories hinders progress. He spends millions of Reichsmarks working on a phase-vibratory Earth-Chariot whose exophase field (see ***GURPS Ultra-Tech,*** p. 96) could let it travel through the center of the Earth to allow German troops to emerge in Washington or Moscow. The German general staff just want him to start mass producing vibro-cannons to shake Russian tanks to bits.

1942: British ubercog Barnaby Wallace builds a plasma "heat ray" cannon (a flamer) to be fitted to tanks and ships; the power supply is a limitation (1/10th the shots of ***Ultra-Tech*** flamers). Italian ubercog Enrico Giovanni has a falling out with Mussolini after the dictator rejects a plan that would have reorganized the entire Italian economy on "scientific" principles under his own direction. Giovanni escapes Rome in a ornithopter of his own invention and flies to his mistress's chateau in the Swiss Alps. From this aerie, he courts both Axis and Allied diplomats to bid on the auction of his latest invention, the weather-control ray. In Tokyo, the Japanese ubercog chemist Toshi Mishami invents a process for synthesizing monomolecular wire that can cut nearly anything.

1943: In the United States, American ubercog Dr. Richard Rickover had barely completed his Ph.D. dissertation when he was recruited by the Manhattan Project. While working on the atomic bomb, he came up with a novel way to "reverse" the process, inventing the nuclear damper field theory, only to have the concept promptly stolen by Soviet spies. Another German ubercog, Max Heller, completes his initial project – the development of a mechanical robot double of Hitler (to confuse assassins), but then is ordered to switch to work on reverse-engineering the Polish electrogravitic engine. The explosion of a prototype leaves his face badly scarred. He adopts a silver mask that resembles an SS Death's Head, and becomes known as the Silver Skull.

1944: Infinity Patrol agents complete a preliminary analysis of this worldline and judge there is a high risk that ubercogs might develop worldjumping technology. Given that there are only a small number of ubercogs (unless someone duplicates the original device), they recommend close monitoring of the situation with black ops teams ready to kidnap or eliminate any ubercogs who begin pursuing lines of research relating to parallel worlds.

Igor-1, 1944

Current Affairs

The course of the Second World War is disrupted by the challenges of an artificial abundance of mad scientists.

Divergence Point

1937; the premature development of electro-cognitive enhancement gives dozens of people enhanced engineering talents at the cost of mental stability.

Major Civilizations

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

Great Powers

Great Britain (parliamentary democracy, CR 3), Empire of Japan (CR 4), Nazi Germany (dictatorship, CR 4), United States (representative democracy, CR3), Soviet Union (dictatorship, CR5).

Worldline Data

TL: 6+1^ **Mana Level:** low
Quantum: 3 **Infinity Class:** P2 **Centrum Zone:** Inaccessible

Notes

The basic rule of this reality: Gadgeteers can conceive of any pulp-tastic superscience device regardless of nominal TL, but if isn't weird and funky enough, it can't function more than a few times. The only post-TL6 gear in widespread use should be TL7-9 devices that were conceived of in pre-1950s sci-fi. Flamers ("heat rays"), rocket pistols, and weather-control machines are cool, but lasers or computer networks aren't. For tips on keeping weird science in check, see *Out Standing in My Field, All Alone* on pp. 36-37 of *Pyramid #3/46: Weird Science.*

Ubercogs

Records indicate that 48 people underwent successful cognitive enhancement before the device was destroyed. Naturally, some cognitively enhanced individuals have attempted to replicate the Umbramore ubermachine, so far with mixed results that have fried more brains than they have managed to improve.

People that underwent the treatment usually acquired from 25 to 60 points of the following advantages, balanced by a matching value (-25 to -60 points) of select disadvantages.

Advantages: Any of IQ +1 [20], Artificer [10/level], Gadgeteer [25] *or* Quick Gadgeteer [50], Higher Purpose (Invent technology in one particular field) [5], Lightning Calculator [2] *or* Intuitive Mathematician [5], Mathematical Ability [10/level], or Single-Minded [5].

Disadvantages: Megalomania [-10] is ubiquitous, along with any of Absent-Mindedness [-15], Bad Temper [-10*], Bully [-10*], Callous [-5], Delusions [Varies], Fanaticism [-15], Jealousy [-10], Manic-Depressive [-20], Obsession [-5* or -10*], On the Edge [-15*], Paranoia [-10], Sadism [-15*], Split Personality [-15*], or Workaholic [-5].

Ubercogs might also be considered valuable property (with the Social Stigma) by their governments. The scientists usually acquire Enemies out to kidnap them or their inventions.

Individuals treated with knock-off versions of the original machine often acquire Amnesia, Epilepsy, or Neurological Disorder, or a reduced IQ. They generally do not gain any advantages.

Case Study: Count Stratos

Among the most infamous of the ubercogs is the exiled Dr. Jerzy Strakis of Poland, alias "Count Stratos of Strativara." His story demonstrates what ubercogs are capable of.

Strakis came from an aristocratic Polish military family. In 1936, he went to England to study math and engineering at Cambridge University, and his mediocre grades made him a good candidate for the Umbramore machine. He underwent six treatments, resulting in a remarkable increase in his abilities – his pioneering thesis on electrogravitic unification opened up a whole new field whose implications left even Albert Einstein awed.

After Umbramore's death, Strakis returned to Poland to work at an engineering firm, developing a high-performance hydrogen fuel cell. His family contacts and the rise of Hitler's Nazi Germany led to an appointment to Poland's "Colonel's Government" as Deputy Minister of Technology, attempting emergency upgrades to the beleaguered state's armed forces. Using governmental resources, he developed e-gravity theory into a working series of electrogravitic motors and rotary-reactionless drive.

Strakis planned to equip a force of Polish tanks with gravitic drives, but he was too late. As the stock of motors were being delivered from the factories, the Luftwaffe was bombing Warsaw. Not wanting his inventions to fall to Nazis, he instead had his anti-gravity machines placed around the prime minister's residence (the old Royal Castle), and in the midst of the German bombardment lifted it and several hundred people to safety to escape as a government in exile. Armed with anti-aircraft guns, the flying citadel blasted its way out of Polish air space and sailed across Europe, making a beeline for France. An attack by a squadron of German Stuka bombers killed the prime minister and several other cabinet officials and left Strakis the senior government representative aboard. As the Polish military collapsed, Strakis proclaimed he was now Free Poland. Dubbed "Cloud City" by a dazed but eloquent American war correspondent who had snuck aboard, the New York Times mangled Strakis as "Count Stratos" and claimed his mobile fortress was nicknamed "Stratoveria" by Allied troops. Breathless reports chronicled his epic odyssey over German-held territory as the sky-castle flew were it was forced by Axis attacks to divert to neutral Switzerland. He never quite made it to France, but a legend was born: the Flying Polack.

Later, after having fought his way across the Mediterranean and intervened in the Desert War between the British Eighth Army and Rommel's Afrika Corps, Stratos crossed Africa and began using the Cloud City to hunt Nazi U-boats as part of the Battle of the Atlantic. Later still, he offered assistance to the Americans in Operation Torch, where the Cloud City served as a mobile base for launching gliders and paratroops. The Count's ultimate plan is to use his Free Poland Battalion and the Polish Parachute Division (which had formed in England) as part of an aerial assault to liberate Warsaw.

Cloud City (TL6+1^)

Count Stratos' Cloud City is a flying European castle, complete with a partial foundation, gardens, and open courtyard. Several gun turrets have been installed. Also known as the Stratoveria, the "ship" uses an unstreamlined 100,000-ton (SM +12) hull 300' across. The machinery is in the dungeons, along with Count Stratos' laboratory, while living quarters and control rooms are in the castle keep and towers. It also has a garage (holding a limousine and a light tank) and a crane system. It can fly at 80 mph in atmosphere.

Front Hull	***System***
[1]	Stone (dDR 7).
[2]	Open Space (one acre).
[3]	Habitat (300 luxury cabins).*
[4]	Hangar Bay (3,000 tons).*
[5]	Cargo Hold (5,000 tons).
[6]	Control Room (C4 computers, comm/sensor 8, 20 control stations).*
Central Hull	***System***
[1]	Stone (dDR 7).
[2]	Open Space (one acre).
[3]	Fuel Tank (5,000 tons, adds 6 hours to both fuel cells).
[4]	Fuel Cell (one Power Point, 3 hours).*
[5]	Tertiary Battery (15 turrets with 10cm rapid-fire guns, 2,250 tons cargo).*
[6]	Habitat (10 briefing rooms, 10 establishments, 260 luxury cabins, eight offices, clinic, large lab, ops center, science! lab).*
[core!]	Contragravity Lifter.
Rear Hull	***System***
[1]	Stone (dDR 7).
[2]	Open Space (one acre).
[3]	Fuel Cell (one Power Point, 3 hours).*
[4!]	Rotary Reactionless Drive (0.1G).*
[5, 6]	Fuel Tanks (5,000 tons each, adds 12 hours to both fuel cells).
[core!]	Refinery (1,500 tons/hr.).*

*10 workspaces per system.

It uses electro-mechanical computers. It can fly for 21 hours before needing refueling, which can be done from seawater, though the city cannot use its rotary engine while doing so.

The complement consists of 20 bridge crew, 25 ops station crew and gunners, 90 technicians and service personnel, and over 800 civilians and soldiers.

TL	Name	dST/HP	Hnd/SR	HT	Move	LWt.	Load	SM	Occ	dDR	Range	Cost
PILOTING (Contragravity)/TL7												
6+1^	Cloud City	300	-4/4*	13	0.1G/*c**	100,000	10,362	+12	1,120ASV	7	–*	$2,096M

* In atmosphere, Hnd is -1, Move is 1/125, and Range is 4,000.

ARADO REICHSFLUGSCHEIBEN (TL6+1^)

Electrogravitic technology is still experimental, but other ubercogs have reverse-engineered Count Stratos' published papers and designed their own systems. The most successful of these is the "Reich flying disk," manufactured in limited numbers by Arado and designed by the Silver Skull. Developing with the same principles as Cloud City, it uses a 30-ton (SM +5) streamlined saucer-shaped hull. It is capable of an astonishing (for the period) 1,100 mph top speed. Thanks to its contragravity, it can perform vertical takeoffs and landings or hover in the air.

Only a dozen have been built so far. Some are engaged in defense of the Reich, while others are employed in special ops missions or transporting senior Nazi leaders. A few are assigned to trusted ubercogs for their own projects, such as the secret Fimbulwinter Base the Silver Skull is building in Antarctica (along with a robot duplicate of Der Fuhrer).

Front Hull	System
[1-2]	Light Alloy Armor (total dDR 2).
[3]	Tactical Comm/Sensor Array (comm/sensor 3).
[4]	Control Room (C1 computers, comm/sensor 1, one control station).
[5, 6]	Passenger Seating (four seats).
[core]	Fuel Cell (one Power Point, 3 hours).
Central Hull	**System**
[1-2]	Light Alloy Armor (total dDR 2).
[3!]	Major Battery (turret with 10 MJ sonic cannon; see below).
[4]	Major Battery (turret with 5cm rapid fire gun).*
[5, 6]	Fuel Cells (total two Power Points, 3 hours).
[core!]	Contragravity Lifter.
Rear Hull	**System**
[1-2]	Light Alloy Armor (total dDR 2).
[3]	Hangar (1.5 tons, holds two motorcycles and sidecars).
[4]	Fuel Tank (1.5 tons fuel, powers three fuel cells for 4 hours).
[5, 6!]	Rotary Reactionless Engines (total 0.2G).

The vessel is typically crewed by a pilot in the control room and two gunners in the turrets. It can carry up to four other passengers or crewmen (often including a sensor tech and engineer). It uses electro-mechanical computers. It can fly for seven hours, or 10.5 hours if the sonic cannon is taken offline, its power routed to the engines.

The implications of electrogravitic unification left even Albert Einstein awed.

Sonic Cannon

The flying disk's sonic cannon comprises focused infrasonic disruptors generating deadly vibratory Wagnerian sound waves. They don't work in vacuum, but can function under water. Use the following statistics.

TL	Weapon	Damage	sAcc	Range	Rcl
6+1^	Sonic	cor*	-6	R0	1

* Use d-Dam column 2; the 10 MJ sound weapons of the Nazi saucers inflict dDam 8d (that is 8d×10), capable of vibrating through the armor on a Sherman tank or reducing a P-51 Mustang to scrap in a few seconds.

TL	Name	dST/HP	Hnd/SR	HT	Move	LWt.	Load	SM	Occ	dDR	Range	Cost
PILOTING (CONTRAGRAVITY)/TL7												
6+1^	Reichsflugscheiben	20	-2/3*	12	0.2G/*c**	30	1.9	+5	3+4SV	2	–*	$1.153M

* In atmosphere, Hnd is 0, Move is 2/550, and Range is 5,800 (or 8,700 without the sonic cannon).

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.

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The Infinite Aisles

by Phil Masters

Some people travel the Infinite Worlds by the exotic technologies of projector and conveyor, while some employ the formalities of Cabalistic magic and brave the terrors of the Astral Plane. Some search out "natural" gates, while others ride the dimensional highways in suicide machines . . .

And some people have really bad experiences while out grocery shopping.

The Chain

Auer Retail is a massive parachronic anomaly that nobody has noticed yet. It – or rather, something of that name, with much the same characteristics – exists on a number of timelines, spread across the quantum bands in no mathematically or intuitively identifiable pattern. The only constraints on its manifestations are that it only exists on timelines where a number of substantial supermarket chains can and do exist, effectively limiting it to TL6 worlds at the minimum and usually to TL7+ worlds in practice, and ensuring its absence from anywhere with a global communist government or other economic exotica. Also, all of these worlds are parallels – usually but not necessarily close parallels – but none are ever echoes. Auer doesn't exist on Homeline, and hence probably can't exist on an echo; its presence or emergence would most likely be a sign that an "echo" is actually an anchor timeline.

Versions of Auer itself vary considerably in detail, but it's usually a multinational company that has existed for some years or decades. Typically an Austrian or Austrian-descended businessman or family whose name was Auer founded the chain. In a few cases, "AUER" is an acronym. Most but not all manifestations started in Austria but now have some kind of international operations. In worlds with what Homeline would call conventional corporate capitalism, about half are public companies, while the other half are still owned by the founding families or partners. None have expanded far outside the retail business.

All versions of Auer have certain similarities. They don't have identical signs or logos, but their trade dress is strikingly similar – usually involving red and white lettering on a green background. Most sell a few "store brand" lines (probably just bought in bulk from local suppliers who add an Auer logo in their packaging facility). They all buy much more from small independent suppliers, often in rather small volumes; an Auer branch's stock is always changing slightly from day to day, but the general style remains the same. Although the chain is usually profitable, it's never the biggest supermarket chain around, even in its home country. Its corporate philosophy always emphasizes low prices and high throughput over high quality or style.

One common oddity is a willingness to experiment by selling legal but slightly peculiar items, apparently whenever the central purchasing department trips over some consignment of riding saddles or diesel-engine components or foreign confectionery going cheap. Another is a slight but pervasive aversion to computerization; Auer branches and managers do use computers, but they're never anywhere near the leading edge for their world. Instead, staff – from senior purchasing managers down to cashiers – are often expected to hold large amounts of information in their heads. Very few versions of Auer offer any sort of online shopping service.

Auer advertising and promotions are always modestly competent but deadly dull by most standards. The company takes out small slots in newspapers and on local radio, pointing out that they sell useful stuff cheap. They avoid flashy bargains or weird special offers. They don't exactly avoid attention, but they tend to escape being noticed as anything except "just another local supermarket." This may explain why no crosstime travelers (except for certain very confused shoppers) have yet registered their subtly anomalous aspects.

The Shops

Thanks to this common corporate culture, Auer branches are much more likely to be in small retail parks on the edges of small towns, rather than in town centers or glossy shopping developments. They're never "megastores" by local standards, although they're always big enough to sell a fairly decent range of ordinary food, domestic supplies, and those occasional odds and ends of almost any locally legal sort. Management believes that moving into the biggest cities or prestigious malls means paying higher rents than they want to endure. They serve very ordinary people with tight budgets, and serve them well.

Stores are somehow always a little bit scruffy and "tired," although the company obeys local hygiene law to varying degrees. The establishments are somehow cleaner than they look, and pass health and safety inspections with little trouble. Auer branch management is rarely more corrupt than local business practices demand.

Oh yes, and on every world where they exist, in between 5% and 20% of Auer Retail branches, the aisles are actually miniature dimensional highways.

The Anomaly

Most Auer customers and staff never register anything strange about their shops, although anyone visiting one of the *unusual* branches may suffer moments of confusion and disorientation. All of these branches are linked to every other such branch, at a multidimensional psychic level, across every timeline where Auer exists, regardless of quantum level, parachronic coordinates, mana, or anything else. Fortunately, for most people who experience the consequences of this link, the effects are limited to two quite minor phenomena.

First, stock occasionally slips between branches. The shops themselves seem to have a minor psychic effect on their employees, "muffling" the peculiarity of this. In some cases, where staff are expected to know the value of everything in the shop, they instinctively assign reasonable prices to products from other realities. Then they forget about the items involved a few minutes later. This can lead to anything from minor frustration when someone buys some product on a whim, finds that they really like it, and can never locate it again, through to legal or mental health problems when goods that are loaded with what are locally illegal items slip into people's baskets. The most common effect is sheer disorientation; branches of Auer seem to have shelves stacked high with things that look both totally mundane and utterly unfamiliar, labeled in unknown languages, with faintly surreal packaging design and manufacturers' addresses in non-existent places.

This disorientation is amplified by the second common phenomenon – customers sometimes slipping into other universes, usually just for a few seconds at a time. The slippage is always subtle, is triggered quite randomly, and is almost always reversed almost instantly. To someone who doesn't know what's going on – which is virtually everyone – branches seem to gain and lose aisles at random, lighting levels and temperatures vary subtly from moment to moment, and the shops can seem to change in size and layout in inexplicable ways. Other shoppers seem to be dressed slightly oddly, and speak with faint, unidentifiable accents.

This also makes it even easier to bring back goods from other universes. Again, staff memories usually seem to change as required to fit. Some staff in these branches – after experiencing a few too many momentary slippages while their minds absorb and then expel the prices of cinnamon-pickled sea-slug, coca-leaf tea, and the locations of papyrus notepads (today's special offer) – become just a little strange, with haunted eyes and a tendency to hum tunes in unknown keys.

Sadly, a few times every year, someone's slippage *isn't* reversed. An innocent shopper wanders into a branch for a few cans of soda and a pack of dried seaweed, walks out in another town in another universe, and is never seen again by his friends or family. Most end up in mental hospitals or on the streets. A very few make trouble for Infinity, but the I-Cops have never yet pinned down how any of these individuals were shifted.

Explanation?

The truth: Auer is a surrealist head-game and a plot device, designed to confuse any Infinite Worlds travelers who trip over it. The store also can be used to provide an explanation of how someone got from one world to another, in games where the PCs are dimensionally displaced persons, or have to deal with such. There is no definitively correct explanation for what's going on here. If it matters, make it up. If it helps, think of Auer as retail capitalism's answer to Silenzia and Wanshijieshan (***GURPS Infinite Worlds,*** p. 80).

For those who want some suggested background assumptions, here are a few possibilities.

The Psychic Scream: The first couple of Auer Retail chains were completely mundane. However, by one of those million-to-one coincidences that feed stories, they existed on two completely different timelines and were completely unconnected, while converging on very similar corporate styles and cultures. As each became part of the social wallpaper for millions of people on the two worlds, subtle psychic resonance across the dimensions became shrieking feedback, hammering its way into the minds of hapless businessmen and shoppers on other Earths. The feedback still echoes in the minds of sensitive Auer staff; where enough employees in a branch happen to be latent psychics or mages, they can end up *opening ways* without being aware of what they do.

Ontological Shrapnel: There used to just be one Auer Retail, on one world, and it was nothing special, though it was much bigger and more successful than any current manifestation – a family run company based in that timeline's version of Austria. Then, one year, the traditional family corporate meeting at the company's HQ happened to be ground zero for . . . something. Something very bad, and possibly not even comprehensible to sane human minds. As the ground-zero metaphor suggests, it was something explosive. Every version of Auer that now exists is a fragment of that original, blasted across the flow of history itself and embedded in local reality and causality. But laws of similarity and contagion apply; the fragments are still connected. As to the company's original reality . . . well, perhaps the best thing to say is *don't go there.*

Si Monumentum Requiris: On some high-magic timelines where gods really exist, even gods can die – and gods have significance across the Infinite Worlds. When a certain god of merchants and markets on one such world eventually passed away, whether in some Ragnarok or from age and senility, he made one last, desperate effort to *reach out* from his death-throes. Auer is at once his catafalque and his deliquescing corpse.

I think that maybe in every company today there is always at least one person who is going crazy slowly.

– Joseph Heller

About the Author

Phil Masters is a British roleplaying writer and the ***Transhuman Space*** line editor. And there's a shop in the next town to where he lives that does this really nice Black Forest ham.

Patchwork

by Michele Armellini

The hallmark of Patchwork, an "alternate Earth" setting, is diversity. On Patchwork, the demise of Alexander the Macedonian was considered predictable, after the event. He had gained too much, too quickly, and gods punish hubris. Indeed, he died an undignified death, falling from his horse in the opening stages of the Battle of Gaugamela (331 B.C., according to Homeline's calendar). His demoralized army wasn't entirely wiped out, but it was soundly beaten.

Alexander's heirs and lieutenants struggled to pick up the pieces, but his shattered dream was never restored.

Evil Empires

Two Macedonian camps soon formed. Parmenion, a general, held sway in the Middle East, while Antipater already was the regent in Macedonia and Greece. Nominally, the Macedonian king on behalf of whom Antipater ruled was Philip III Arrhidaeus, who conveniently happened to be with Parmenion. It also helped that he wasn't the brightest light in the dynasty.

The Greek *poleis* (city-states) immediately rose against the Macedonian domination, which they had always resented. Antipater led several expeditions and quelled many revolts in blood, but was stalemated by the Spartans, who were the only ones to gain an early, relative independence. The rest of Greece groaned under the hated oppression of a foreign empire for 14 long years. Antipater supported tyrants and ruled through terror. During this time, many enterprising Greeks chose to leave their homeland to found cities in Southern Italy. Spartans often achieved leadership positions in these independent-minded settlements.

Meanwhile, the young Persian emperor Darius III had tried to exploit his luck at Gaugamela, but he was repeatedly defeated by Parmenion, albeit inconclusively. Years went by in uneasy truces, lackluster campaigning, and long-drawn sieges, with Parmenion remaining in control of much of the western end of the Persian Empire.

Patchwork-1, 428

Current Affairs

The Western civilization is a dazzling jigsaw of city-states, and ever-shifting alliances form to curb any imperialist ambitions.

Divergence Point

331 B.C.; Alexander the Great dies in battle, the Persian Empire struggles on, and the Greek cities reaffirm their independence. Empires remain a foreign, evil, backward model, and the Roman one is nipped in the bud.

Major Civilizations

Western (diffuse), Iranic (empire), Indic (empire with satellites), Chinese (multipolar), Meso-American (diffuse).

Great Powers

Sassanid Empire (dictatorship, CR4), Gupta Empire (dictatorship, CR5), Liu Song Dynasty (oligarchy, CR4).

Worldline Data

TL: 3 **Mana Level:** low
Quantum: 6 **Infinity Class:** O9 **Centrum Zone:** Unknown

Sudden Anticlimax

In the end, in a typical piece of Argead dynastic treason, somebody murdered both Parmenion and Philip III in the army's camp. With suspicious promptness, Antipater proclaimed himself king, and the leaderless army was defeated by the Persians in the Battle of Sardis in 316 B.C.

Antipater's kingdom crumbled within two years. The battle-hardened veterans from many Greek cities provided the expertise, while Antipater's puppets were bloodily disposed of by local mavericks. The Thracians betrayed him, too, and the Macedonians were defeated piecemeal.

The Greek cities braced for the unavoidable Persian revenge. However, it turned out that that empire's regional governors, the satraps, had enjoyed their autonomy way too much. Darius ended his days putting down uprisings all across his domains, and barely managed to reestablish Persian control over the Greek cities on the eastern shore of the Aegean.

Never Again

By 298 B.C., the Greek way of living began experiencing the so-called Panhellenic Revival, not just in Greece but in southern Italy and in other spots of the Mediterranean coasts.

The Greeks had believed empires to be backward, foreign, intolerable systems when they had come to know the Persians'. After the Macedonian experience, they were vaccinated forever against imperial dreams. Their philosophers had always theorized about the virtues of the *polis*, and their generals provided victories to show as evidence of its superiority. Their civilization had been reinvigorated by the struggle, and they were determined, to a man, never to fall under an empire's yoke again.

The preexisting system of leagues saw a resurgence. These always had a leading power, the "hegemon," and junior allies. Individual cities, too weak to defend themselves on their own, could count on their confederation's help. This successful Greek model was later adopted by other nations, too.

The first two decades of the third century B.C. saw a great expansion of trade, and therefore the growth of Athens, the most important seaport. Agathos, the new satrap ruling the westernmost province of Persia, came to terms and profited from the trade. The Spartans busied themselves with establishing new colonies.

Then, competition with the other great seafarers and merchants of the Mediterranean, the Phoenicians, grew bitter. In their homeland, they were following the Greek teachings, with Byblos, Sidon, and Tyre as their city states. In the central Mediterranean, their ideally sited, quickly growing center of Carthage was clearly showing signs of imperialism. And the Greeks were not going to accept that, particularly not from a trade competitor.

Neapolis, 428

Population: 520,000 (Search +3)

Physical and Magical Environment

Terrain: Plains
Appearance: Attractive (+1) **Hygiene:** -1
Low Mana (No Enchantment)

Culture and Economy

Language: Koiné **Literacy:** Broken
TL: 3
Wealth: Wealthy (x2) **Status:** -2 to 6

Political Environment

Government: Athenian Democracy, Patriarchy, Oligarchy
CR: 3 (Corruption -1)
Military Resources: $36.4M **Defense Bonus:** +6

Notes

Neapolis is the largest city of the Western civilization. Some 35% of its population are slaves. Only free adult males have full citizen rights, but wealthy foreign residents can buy citizenship. A complex system of direct democracy is actually steered by a number of rich families; the members of collective ruling bodies are mostly chosen randomly and they are formally equals, but those with the right background have much more say.

Neapolis boasts the largest harbor and merchant fleet in the Mediterranean (+2 to search rolls) and valuable agricultural produce (wine and oil, +1 to search rolls). Its artists and craftsmen are famous everywhere (+2 to search rolls). Many cities on Patchwork are healthy for TL3, but Neapolis is seriously overcrowded. Its CR is 4 for military mobilization, with most of the resources invested in the navy. Finding pirates in the area around Neapolis is difficult indeed (-2 to search rolls).

The Roman Blip

Before the expected showdown between the Greek confederations and the Punic power could take place, individual Greek city-states in southern Italy were involved on both sides of another war. The conflict was between Pyrrhus, the king of Epyrus and a would-be imitator of Alexander; and the rising star of central Italy, Rome. The Carthaginians soon were drawn in, too, as their Sicilian colonies were attacked.

The confrontation lasted four years, and it was a headache of shifting alliances. To the contrary of what the upstart Romans expected, the Greek colonies were warlike and determined, and could muster more and more allies as the war went on. The siege of the Spartan-dominated colony of Neapolis (Naples) came to naught thanks to the huge combined Greek fleet. Whenever one of the three expansionist states (Rome, Carthage, or Pyrrhus) seemed to be gaining the upper hand, the Greek constellations of smaller powers ganged up against it. This would later become a recurring pattern on Patchwork.

The first to call it quits was Pyrrhus, who withdrew to Epirus with little to show for his war. Then Rome failed catastrophically, beset simultaneously by the Carthaginian fleet, the phalanx army of Neapolis, the restless Samnite tribes, and an insurrection by the apparently pacified Etruscan cities. Rome was sacked and burned to the ground by Agis IV of Neapolis in 276 B.C. Later, that city was rebuilt, but it would never entertain imperial ambitions again.

The Carthaginians also learned the lesson. They were weakened by the war and had lost possessions in Sicily. They decided the imperial model was too costly and, merchants that they were, they simply cut their losses.

Beware, lest in your anxiety to avoid war, you obtain a master.

– Demosthenes

City-States Galore

Over the following centuries, "the smaller, the better" was the byword. The Mediterranean shores, as well as the more densely populated parts of Europe, remained a patchwork of modest-sized entities. Not all of them were republican city-states proper, even though the Phoenicians, the Southern Italians, and others happily adopted the model. The Celts, on the other hand, preferred small to tiny "kingdoms." Farther north, there were tribes. But no new far-reaching empire came into being.

There were exceptions. For instance, Egypt still was the pharaohs' kingdom, and it wasn't small. But it was a decadent backwater; Homeline historians compare its position to that of China in the 1800s, a backward market picked to the bone by more advanced traders from their "concessions." Then there was an attempt by Sparta to unify the whole Peloponnese; it was the Second Peloponnese War, and it ended predictably in 159 B.C. with the defeat of the Spartans at the hands of nearly everybody else.

Outworld Operations

The Infinity Patrol (see ***GURPS Infinite Worlds***, p. 8) is not overly worried about Patchwork-1. No manmade disasters seem looming, and no evidence has surfaced of any Centran meddling, for the time being. The parallel is open to tourism and trade. It's not a popular destination for tourists. Export companies are mostly interested in raw resources mined from isolated areas, and "ancient" artworks bought for a pittance. Cross-dimensional smugglers, swindlers, and other criminals have begun flocking here, unfortunately.

The current hands-off, low-priority attitude of the understaffed Infinity team assigned to Patchwork-1 might change if Centran agents show up. The Sassanid Empire, with its strategic position and expansionist drive, would be a prime candidate for infiltration by Centrum. The present imperial policy of reasonable tolerance and local autonomy could be steered toward rationality and meritocracy. The recent, easy conquest of Tarsos by the Sassanids is now being investigated by Infinity agents.

Sometimes, a number of city-states negotiate a closer alliance than the typical league agreements, or kingdoms grow intertwined and may even unify through royal marriage. That is accepted, but only until a certain critical mass is reached, or until an aggressive move is made. Then the other federations react. Probably the most important part of statesmanship on Patchwork is gauging how far your country can go before being brought back to the fold.

But the imperial temptation has not died. The Parthian Empire had a late start under Phraates III in 116 B.C., but, not having to face the Romans, it quickly came to the Anatolian shores, and then it besieged Tyre. For some time, it seemed that the diffuse-power system was impotent against this centralized conqueror, because the city-states farther away from the threat did not recognize it as such. Neapolis, Carthage, and the Punic colony of Tingis (Tangier) actually seemed happy to see the competition struggling. Fortunately, the Parthians were hit by Asian nomads' migrations and by the uprisings of Hellenized Phrygians and Armenians.

To this day, if the diffuse Mediterranean civilization of Patchwork needs a reminder of the dangers of empires, the Eastern part of their world can be relied upon to provide it.

Patchwork Today

It is now the first year of the 301st Olympiad on Patchwork (428 A.D.); the Western civilization still uses the Olympic games for a calendar. The overall situation along the Mediterranean shores and in western and southern Europe is stable. Small wars are going on among minor alliances of city-states, but they tend to be limited, trade-related wars. Pirates are mercilessly hunted down. The most important *poleis*, which are leaders of their own confederation, are Neapolis, Athens, Carthage, Tyre, Sparta, and Tingis; none of them can be defined as a world-class great power, though. Traders prowl the seas and haggle in the seaports. Politicians – who are often merchants themselves – bicker in the assembly halls and sponsor artists. Explorers leave for distant shores, looking for places for new settlements and untapped sources of income. Indeed, the Canary Islands and western Ireland are home to recently established Phoenician trading posts.

New threats loom in the East, however. What once was the Persian and then the Parthian Empire is now home to the no less aggressive Sassanid dynasty, currently ruled by Narsi I. This shrewd emperor is a militarist, bent on conquest, but he's wisely learned from his opponents; he leaves his newly conquered subjects a measure of autonomy and doesn't destroy their temples. In his latest campaign, he has subjugated Tarsos, thus gaining a foothold on the Mediterranean. Complex negotiations are now going on between the Empire and the Phoenician Confederation (the alliance led by Tyre), which is likely to be Narsi's next target, if those cities don't offer him some very good deal. Athenian agitators argue on the Acropolis that the Sassanids must be kept in check, just like their predecessors were, while there are rumors that Neapolis is about to send envoys to Narsi's court.

That's not the end of the troubles. Some Homeline historians have always argued that the weakness of the Roman Empire was the cause, not the consequence, of the great migrations from the East, with the wealth of the decadent Romans attracting the barbarians. That theory may be partially vindicated by events on Patchwork, where there is no ripe empire to pick – no migration on Homeline's scale is taking place. Even so, there is some movement, namely by the Goth tribes. Possibly under pressure by the Huns, these are coming West. Not having the Roman model to imitate, they currently seem happy with morphing with the city-states they conquer. Indeed, when Arderic the Conqueror established a large Goth realm in Austria in 406, that lasted only until his death. At that time, a fratricide war erupted among his four sons and assorted chieftains. Now that the dust has settled, each of the survivors holds a city-state-sized "kingdom."

But the pressure is mounting, with more tribes are arriving. Rumor has it that next summer, they'll spill beyond the Alps. This worries the Celtic Northern Italian kings no end.

A Marvelous Diversity

No matter what the future holds for Patchwork, what the first Scouts admired is still here. The Panhellenic Revival spread Hellenic culture throughout the Mediterranean, along with *Koiné* (common tongue), a streamlined version of Greek incorporating many Phoenician loan words. However, without a unified empire, there never were any minimum standards, universal laws, or a single ruling system. People adopted *Koiné* because it was the traders' language, and they chose Greek statues or philosophers because they were fashionable. They never entirely gave up their own language, arts, ideas, beliefs, and governmental organizations.

Society

Many of the Western city-states are Athenian Democracies (see p. B509), at least formally. This ideal slowly grew old, however, and some of these *poleis* are actually run by oligarchies, the military, or even bureaucracies. Dictatorships, either in the form of a monarchy or under an outright tyrant, are a possibility; Celts and Germans seemingly preferred that, but over the centuries, many tribes have adopted a primitive feudal system or a basic Athenian democracy. Some cities south of Tyre are theocracies.

Larger political entities – such as Egypt, the Numidians to the west of Carthage, the Southern German Kingdom, and of course the Eastern empires – tend to be dictatorships.

Status is important in all Western countries and it ranges from 6 to -2. Wealth grants free levels of Status (see p. B26). In most places Ranks are temporary, and higher levels are only bestowed to high-Status people. Thus, Rank does not provide Status for free. In some cities, however, *lower* Ranks (up to 3) are the purview of career professionals, and one level of Status is granted for free at Rank 2 or 3.

Social Classes

Status	*Examples*
6	Senior statesman, head of an important aristocratic family, tyrant, king
5	Junior statesman, head of an average aristocratic family, minor king
4	Average aristocrat, important chieftain
3	Minor aristocrat, wealthy businessman, famous celebrity
2	Average businessman, wealthy landowner, minor celebrity
1	Important citizen
0	Free citizen, minor landowner
-1	Indentured laborer, freed slave, servant, valuable slave
-2	Slave

The Social Network

City-states tend to be small worlds indeed. Once you disregard slaves, women, minors, and other "inferiors," it's a good-old-boys' club. Full citizens are part of a complex web of family relationships, business links, and personal allegiances. It's hard to get by without Favors, Contacts, Allies, Patrons, and (non-hazardous) Duties.

Additionally, Westerners prize personal achievements. Many characters with Status 1 or higher will "be someone" – they'll have at least a local Reputation, and possibly more than one. A perk-level Reputation is a possibility (see ***GURPS Power-Ups 2: Perks,*** p. 18).

Religion

While Christianity exists, and it's the state religion of some city-states, it was never mated to a far-reaching empire.

Namnetodunon, 428

Population: 8,000 (Search 0)

Physical and Magical Environment

Terrain: Swampland
Appearance: Unattractive (-1) **Hygiene:** -3
Low Mana (No Enchantment)

Culture and Economy

Language: Koiné **Literacy:** Broken
TL: 3
Wealth: Struggling (x0.5) **Status:** -2 to 4

Political Environment

Government: Athenian Democracy, Patriarchy, Subjugated
CR: 3 (Corruption -1)
Military Resources: $0 **Defense Bonus:** +5

Notes

Namnetodunon is an example of how things can go bad on Patchwork. It lies in the location of Homeline's Nantes, near the mouth of the Loire River. It is the hometown of the Namnetes, a Celtic tribe. Today, it is under control of Tingis, the Phoenician city. 75% of the population are Celts, having Social Stigma (Second-Class Citizen) and often Status -1.

It began when the Tingites established a trading post and came to an understanding with *some* of the locals. Many other Celts in the area disliked it. After a sudden uprising, a bloody repression, and an exhausting guerrilla campaign, Namnetodunon is much worse off as a colony. The Tingite League and the local Celtic alliance of tribes are at war.

The location was once famous for its tin ore, but the mines in the region are much less productive nowadays (only +1 to search rolls). Somewhere in the swamps, an island hosts an important women-only mystery cult, but it's secret and hidden (-1 to search rolls). The military forces present (some 300 medium infantrymen and a couple of light warships) belong to Tingis. The fortifications are in bad repair, but its island location makes Namnetodunon difficult to conquer.

Other religions still thrive, such as Mithraism, Judaism, mystery cults (some of them less than recommendable), traditional pantheons, and more. Religious diversity also means that no priest is powerful enough to discourage the Olympic games – or public baths or scientific research or indeed nearly anything else. Skepticism makes no news among cultured people, and some cities lack an official religion or laws against atheism and impiety. Natural philosophers – scientists – are often better off in such a situation.

Technology

As a consequence of the lack of war, Patchwork is more technologically advanced than Homeline in 428; it's in early TL3 already. Phoenician shipwrights are building ocean-going vessels, and Celtic smiths are constantly refining their techniques in order to improve their steel blades. Windmills and other power-related innovations are necessary, because, without great military campaigns, slaves are expensive.

Slaves are understandably happy that their lives are not cheap. They are Status -2 and have Social Stigma (Valuable Property), but most owners don't mistreat them. While they aren't citizens, they often have some basic rights, such as the possibility of being freed and the right to own money.

Sparta and the cities under Spartan influence are more traditional. Thus, they lag behind both in technology and in the improvements in the slaves' plight.

Other Patchworks

Patchwork-2 (Q5, current year 548) is on a divergent tech path, TL (2+1). The battle of Gaugamela ended slightly better for Alexander's army, thus the father of Protagoras of Olynthos survived and made it back home, and the famous genius was born. Being the son of a soldier, he focused on developing military technology, and many scientists followed in his tracks. Patchwork-2 armies rely on compressed-air siege artillery and hot-air balloons for battlefield observation, and navies use siphon flamethrowers. Progress spilled over in other fields: algebra is quickly spreading, steam toys are a common curiosity in wealthy households, and Phoenician navigation aids are very advanced.

On **Patchwork-3** (Q7, current year 606), the TL3 Western civilization is a jigsaw – but it's smaller, and coalescing around a large Carthaginian kingdom that might soon become a Western empire. The reason is that the Sassanids have conquered Anatolia, Greece, and the Mediterranean eastern coast all the way to the Nile. The city-states' age might be ending. The Sassanid pressure is pushing the Phoenicians down the western African coasts, up toward northern Europe, and even across the Ocean.

Patchwork-4 (Q6, current year 971) has just been discovered, and the Scouts have immediately put a tight lid on it. It has normal Mana and widespread use of magic and alchemy, plus it's TL(2+3^), with magic-enhanced, compressed-air artillery and steam-and-alchemical siege machines. It's a parallel to keep under close observation, and Infinity analysts think it might head the way of the Azoth skerry. To make matters worse, it seems rife with parachronozoids and Cabalists from other parallels.

Further technological developments are now hampered by the fact that a true breakthrough in pure mathematics has not taken place yet. Meanwhile, banking procedures are remarkably "modern." Medicine and health are fairly advanced for TL3, thanks to numerous public baths.

A lack of war has many consequences.

Magic

Mana is low but present on Patchwork. Mages are rare, and true magical artifacts apparently do not exist (another reason why Infinity allows tourism). Nearly all of the few wizards of Patchwork tend to live in secluded normal-mana spots and earn a living through divination. Some of these locations are, nominally, the ceremonial seats of local Leagues. They all feature temples and places of worship.

The only other relatively known branches of magic seemingly have to do with illusions and basic spells affecting the mind. These are the province of Eastern mages.

Western Values

The ideals of the Western civilization of Patchwork have developed beyond those of classical Greece, thanks to the contributions by Phoenicians, Celts and others. The Western world values personal success and prizes individual initiative. Talent in all manly skills, physical prowess, wealth, and, especially, being highly regarded by one's peers are all facets of that success. Worthy men serve their country as statesmen, officers, or diplomats. They are able to entertain their guests and to perform adequately on a sports field, and they can hold their own when it comes to improvising poetry or to discussing philosophy. The ideal man is *balanced*, not specialized.

Unlike what happens on many other worlds, trading, banking, and running businesses are not considered contemptible. They are acceptable activities even for the aristocrats, though old-fashioned people prefer owning land as the primary source of income. High-Status Phoenicians often maintain flotillas of merchant ships.

In order to fully develop the ideal man's potential, one has to enjoy citizenship rights and, above all, freedom. Westerners react poorly to any attempt at restraining their liberties, no matter how well motivated. The city-state is very much a "social contract" to them. They are aware of the common good, and they like to speculate about its clash with the individual's rights, but their literature and philosophers usually solve the dilemma in favor of the individual. Naturally, this puts them at odds with any notion of god-mandated power or imperial government. They also have to take for granted that some human beings (women, slaves, barbarians) are unable to make good use of such freedom.

Nevertheless, cultured persons are aware of the diversity of their civilization. This tends to make them broad-minded. There *are* nationalism, chauvinism and intolerance in the West, but they are much rarer than in many other TL3 societies.

Using Patchwork

The good thing about this setting is that it's a sort of anything-goes world. No matter how peculiar the wishes of the GM and the tastes of the players are, they will be normal in some corner of Western Europe. Republics or tyrannies, primitive feudalism or theocracies are all possible. If the playing group wants magic, then their hometown will include a normal-mana spot and a coven of seers; otherwise, it can be ignored. If the players would like something in the vein of ancient Greece, they can have it in the more conservative parts of the Mediterranean, but they also can have a less hierarchical, more dynamic environment elsewhere. They can fight the evil empire – or they can see the inevitability of centralized government and work for it. Late matriarchy? Early abolition of slavery? Isolated utopias? A fresh start in the Azores? All of this and more is possible in some corner of Patchwork.

City Politics

A city-state is the ideal size for a group of ambitious, smart, and well-funded guys to make a difference. They can address the assembly and sway it to their own ends, run in the elections or, if magistrates are chosen randomly, work through backroom deals and gain influence on them. They can create a circle of retainers, and become popular by lavishly expending their own money on public projects. But they'd better beware: Their adversaries may harass them through lawsuits, try to ostracize them, or even hire goons.

The Great Game

Our heroes can be statesmen, diplomats, or their retinue. They may welcome a foreign delegation in their homeland, or they may be the ones traveling to strange lands. The purpose here is wooing friends and neutralizing enemies, maintaining old alliances and building new relationships, securing some business on the side, and carrying out good old snooping.

Warfare

The Sassanids and the Goths are on the move, and the PCs are generals or humble soldiers. The cherished freedom and diversity of the West are at stake! Alternatively, a limited war against a neighbor, with smaller forces involved, may be better for those who are intermediate-level officers. And then there's always piracy – on both sides.

Exploration

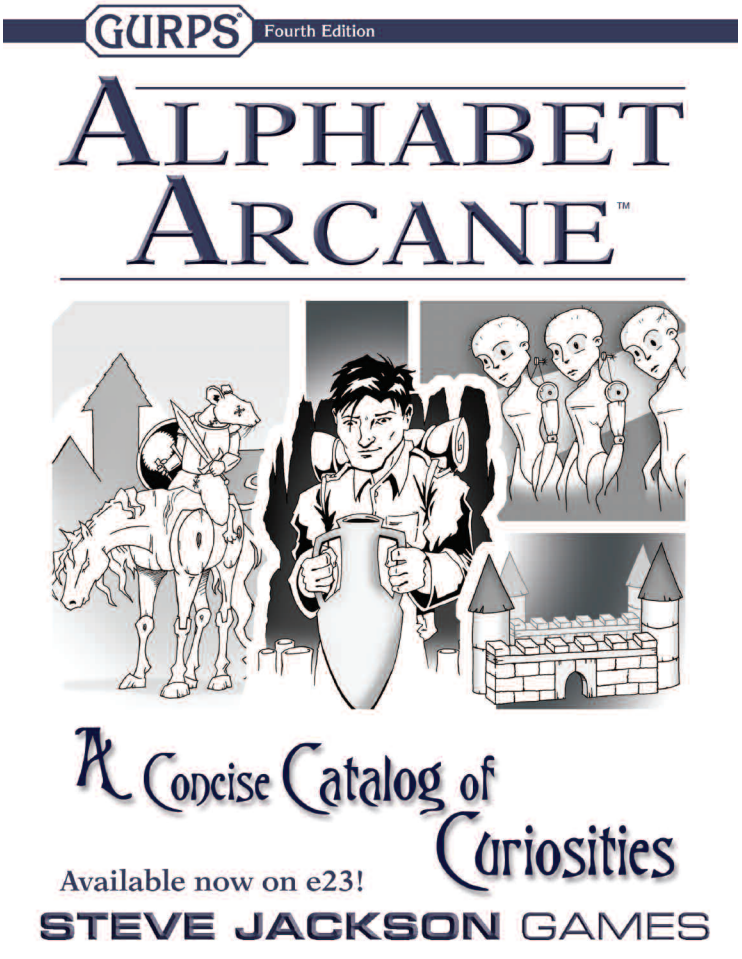
Leave through the Pillars of Hercules and look for trade, treasure, or new land! The adventurers might find, for instance, slaves, ivory, and gold on Western African shores. Or they might end up across the Ocean, and risk opening a Pandora's box: a convergence with Ezcalli (see ***GURPS Infinite Worlds***, p. 122).

Cross-Dimensional Adventuring

All the suggestions above apply to adventurers who are natives of Patchwork, or who pose as such. But given the lax supervision by the understrength Infinity contingent, bold adventurers from other parallels might easily build their own state here, unscrupulous traders could amass fortunes, and Cabalists might hunt for untapped resources.

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.***



Stormbomb-1

by J. Edward Tremlett

Occupied Berlin, 3 March, 1933

Barbara Smith turned up her collar at a sudden gust of cold wind as she said goodnight to her coworker, Adolph, and left the Foreign Ministry.

The bells were just striking 10 – well past curfew. She made sure to have her papers ready, just in case she ran into police on her way home. Suspected counter-persons tended to disappear these days – even ones who worked for King and Empire.

As she did, she saw a new poster of the Prime Minister, his stern, mustachioed face staring at her from a brick wall. ***Ich beobachte Sie immer,*** *it announced: I am always watching you.*

"I sure hope not," she muttered, wondering if the posters were all bugged, like they said.

Another, stronger gust of wind came down the street, bringing light fog with it. She sighed and kept walking, putting aside all the silly stories she'd heard about ghosts lately. All the victims of the storm bomb were supposedly coming back from the dead, if the tales were true, and who knew if they were?

Half-distracted by memories of childhood ghost romances, she suddenly realized there was a sizable group of men coming towards her. They moved quickly, like they had a purpose, and wore heavy goggles, black face masks, and black leather suits. She thought they might be police, but the only badges they sported were odd, hooked crosses on their armbands. They also seemed to be carrying long knives.

Figuring that they were some new kind of anti-crime unit, she stood stock-still, and took out her papers for inspection. As one approached her, she smiled: "Barbara Smith, officer. I work for the Foreign Ministry-"

"Britische Eindringling!" *the man hissed at her, swinging his knife at her neck. It crackled as it came, giving off sparks and light.*

She screamed and dropped to the ground, just avoiding death. He laughed and swung again, but his blow was blocked by a well-aimed sword-cane, held by some dark, red-eyed gentleman in a long coat and black bowler.

"Run, ***habibi,*** *" the man commanded – his accent Welsh by way of Baghdad – before quickly pressing his attack: "Run and do not look back! Not a word to anyone if you know what's good for you!"*

Something about how he said it rattled her even more than the attempt on her life. She got up and ran as four other, equally strange persons squared off against the men in black, their blades crashing and sparking in the fog. She ran and ran until she found herself in bed, praying that it had all been a dream.

In the morning there was no news. Somehow she knew there wouldn't be, and that she should ask no one about it.

Ghosts, indeed.

The parallel code-named Stormbomb-1 lies within Quantum 4. There, it's 1933 – 15 years after the end of the Great War, and just starting to feel the bite of the Great Depression. America has just elected FDR, the USSR is languishing under the rule of Stalin, and Britain has become the de-facto ruler of the world thanks to its discovery, and willingness to use, something called a "storm bomb" – a weapon that creates a banestorm.

Obviously, this has the Infinity Patrol seriously concerned. Not only does this mean that the planet might be on the verge of discovering the Secret, but they've managed to do something that has eluded the abilities of Parachronic Laboratories. It also means that the history of this parallel is seriously out of whack, and that irreparable damage may have been done to the planet's dimensional fabric. Indeed, it's being reported that "ghosts" are being seen in areas that were storm-bombed, and innocent civilians there are being viciously attacked by something that's there and gone before anyone can see.

The Infinity Patrol is going to have its hands full with this parallel for quite some time, giving the GM a number of possibilities for campaigns. With that in mind, this article tells the whole story of this parallel's divergence, and gives Infinity's plans to deal with it. It also provides the current position of other, major world powers and unmasks a few persons of interest who could help Infinity in their goal.

Farewell to Arms

It was early 1918, and the war was going badly for the Allies.

Hopes of an easy, early victory had thudded into the dirt of occupied France. For a while, the rest of Europe held out hope that the Americans might join the struggle, but the Germans wisely gave that mighty nation no reason to do so. As the British Navy's blockade proved shockingly inadequate, Germany stuck by its promise to avoid unrestricted submarine warfare, which satisfied America's desire to stay out of Europe's problem. There were even rumors that the Americans were making quiet diplomatic overtures with the Central Powers, so as to quickly normalize relations with the eventual victors.

Desperate, the British High Command turned to its Experimental Weapons Group: a hodge-podge of inventors, visionaries, and "useful cranks" they'd had on hand since Queen Victoria's reign. These far-seeing fellows had already developed some interesting innovations for King and Country, but had produced nothing capable of decisively winning the war yet.

Fortunately, one rather secretive – and quite imposing – member of the Group had a prototype ready to test. Dr. Kieran Wych described it as a "storm bomb," and said that dropping such a device on an enemy city would end the war within days. He wouldn't go into any more detail than that, though; the High Command would have to see the effects for themselves.

On February 19, a small cluster of VIPs sat on a Highland coast, directly across from Gruinard Island. The Group had been using it for their more "loud and flashy" inventions, and had built mock towns on its coast and hillcrest. That day, the towns were filled with scientific instruments and frightened, chained-down sheep.

As the VIPs watched, a plane flew over the island, dropping a small bomb right onto the hilltop. There was a crack, a boom, and a horrifying ripping noise, as though the world were a sheet being torn in half. Something described as a "black light explosion" rippled into being: a roiling, shuddering whirl of thick, dark clouds crackling with lightning that went up, out, and down the hill to the coast.

The VIPs panicked, but Dr. Wych stood right on the shoreline, fearlessly alternating his gaze between his watch and the storm. He soon began counting down from 10. The second he reached zero, the storm just vanished. Silence reigned once more.

The more adventurous VIPs rowed over to the mock town and inspected it. Most of the buildings were intact, though a few in the center of the bomb's effects were partially or entirely missing, as were some of the scientific instruments. Not a single sheep could be found anywhere. They'd just vanished, right off their chains.

"Gentlemen, I give you the storm bomb," Dr. Wych said, after retrieving a bottle of well-chilled champagne from a nearby building, along with a number of glasses. "It destroys people, but leaves most buildings intact. We could drop bombs of this size on enemy trenches, depopulating them in minutes. We could shell major cities, and then march our Tommies right in to take them over, defenses and all. Give me immediate access to facilities to make a larger version, and a plane capable of taking it to Berlin, and this war will be over by Empire Day."

The facilities were duly handed over, and Dr. Wych and his assistants got to work. Not long after that fateful day, the prototype for a long-range heavy bomber was sped up, with one special, preliminary model being tested and then outfitted for "special purposes." By the end of the month, a Handley Page V/1500 – christened "Solitaire" – sat in a hangar in East Anglia, waiting for perfect conditions.

On March 2, Berlin was "depopulated" at exactly one in the morning their time (midnight in England). The storm bomb engulfed the entire city and its environs within seconds, barely giving Solitaire enough time to speed out of the blast radius.

Immediately after the event, the remaining leadership of the Central Powers decried the "cowardly" attack on a largely civilian population, and threatened massive retaliation. London's reply was another trip for Solitaire, which – flying with an entirely new crew – undertook one more mission, this time to Vienna.

Less than a day later, what few leaders the belligerents had left together offered an unconditional surrender. The Great War was over.

Keeps Raining All the Time

The British took charge of the German Empire and the Ottoman Empire, and proved to be exacting overlords. Prime Minister George, facing a financial crisis due to war debts owed Britain, was quite explicit that the German people pay reparations. Neither he nor his right-hand man, Oswald Mosley, brooked any debate or discussion on the matter.

As for the Ottomans, a Turkish uprising against the occupation was quickly put down by "depopulating" Constantinople in early 1919. Most sane opposition within that region evaporated shortly thereafter, and further pockets of less-than-sane antagonism were dealt with by using smaller bombs.

The French, who took charge of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, quickly became unnerved by their allies' newfound love of *la bombe de l'enfer.* In 1920, after France was effectively shut out of the decision-making process at the San Reno Conference – losing Syria as a consequence – they joined America in trying to quietly persuade Britain to ban peacetime use of the weapon. Britain answered by using it in Iraq, where massive anti-British sentiment had led to "foolhardy" revolts by its people.

Following what became known as the Emptying of Baghdad, France brought a motion before the League of Nations to convince England to ban *all* use of the storm bomb. The British refused, and, in a lengthy harangue, pointed out the other members' positively execrable treatment of their own colonies and protectorates, past and present.

Representative Arnold Leese predicted that fear of the storm bomb quickly would bring all their mandates "into proper line." He stated this could lead to civilized behavior on their part, which could one day elevate them into "proper countries, fit to join this League as full partners in a world without war." Then he threatened Britain would leave the League if this matter was ever brought up again.

Stormbomb-1, 1933

Current Affairs

The British Empire has assumed de-facto control of the planet through the use of a weapon that can create banestorms.

Divergence Points

America does not get involved in the Great War; British naval embargo of Germany proves faulty.

Great Powers

British Empire (effective dictatorship, CR5), United States of America (representative democracy, CR3), USSR (Soviet dictatorship, CR6), France (representative democracy, CR3).

Worldline Data

TL: 6
Mana Level: no to low Mana
Quantum: 4
Infinity Class: Z1
Centrum Zone: Inaccessible

After that, Britain pretty much did whatever it wanted to – especially to France, which still owed them quite a bit of money from the war. In the mid-1920s, when the English decided that the French weren't "pulling their weight" in Africa, the French quickly ceded some of their larger colonial holdings to them. A few years later, when border skirmishes with Czech rebels started costing "precious English blood," the French handed over the entire Prague region rather than watch the city be "emptied" for the sins of the few.

One completely overcomes only what one assimilates.

– André Gide

Now the Sun's the Moon

It's 1933 now, and an impoverished world watches as Britain takes whatever it wants to maintain its preferred standard of life.

The League of Nations has become a rubber-stamp for England's long-serving prime minister, Oswald Mosley. The Empire has offered some monetary aid to other League members, in exchange for certain concessions (mostly territorial), so being expelled at this time would be economic suicide. They have also changed the rules on admitting new nations, which means that England can completely block anyone they don't like – such as the USSR – with a single "nay."

The Mosley government's policies have begun to alter Britain's economy and national character – using the "national emergency" to slowly incorporate fascist and xenophobic principles into daily life. A developing culture of totalitarianism has crept into daily life, with elections becoming harder to call, cameras watching every street corner, and people being urged to report those with negative attitudes to the police. Loud and brutal men in black shirts prowl the streets in search of petty crime, moral offenses, and unregistered "aliens." Large posters of Mosley's stern, mustachioed face grace all public places.

Meanwhile, Britain's Secret Intelligence Service is working overtime to counteract reports of "weird happenings" in areas where major storm bombs were detonated. People claim to have seen "ghosts" in Berlin, Vienna, Constantinople, and Baghdad, emanating from where the weapons fell on these cities. They get the feeling they're being watched, and turn just in time to see ghastly, ethereal faces observing them, but the images disappear before they can even scream.

These sightings have been followed by vicious and lethal knife attacks on British citizens. In all cases, the enemy forces were swift, brutal, and gone before the police could arrive. The weapons they use seem to be heated, based on cauterization of the wounds, and something they are wearing is jamming any video recording of them; to the cameras, it seems the victims are being ripped apart by the air itself.

The evidence seems clear: anywhere the storm bomb was used is being targeted by a hostile force of unknown power. Given how many times Britain has unleashed it, around the world, this could be the start of something truly terrible.

But witnesses had better not say that until they have absolute proof, lest they be branded traitors and shot.

No Sun in that Sky

The postwar actions of the British Empire have made it a number of enemies, both foreign and domestic. They have also produced some strange alliances and entanglements, which could lead to some interesting consequences, given time.

In the United States, incoming President Franklin Delano Roosevelt has promised his people that he can turn their dire economic situation around without any "blood-soaked British money." Still, while he's confident that his New Deal will work, over time, he's quite concerned about Britain getting grabby or bossy – especially with Canada right to the north.

As such, he has quietly reached out a hand to another country that has been severely inconvenienced by Britain's ambitions: Imperial Japan, whose attempt to "liberate" Manchuria was halted by threats from England. Between that and fears of losing British economic aid by being expelled from the League, they are feeling squeezed on both sides, and would very much like an outside, quiet ally.

Right now, they can only think of eventually forming a rival economic bloc. However, Roosevelt's people in Naval Intelligence think they could steal a storm bomb from one of Britain's Pacific holdings – possibly even the airbase in Hong Kong. America has promised that if Japan aids them in this daring maneuver, they will share what they learn. Hopefully, they will have curbed Japan's expansionist tendencies by then.

Meanwhile, Stalin's Soviet Union, still weakened by its disastrous attempts to force-collectivize its agricultural wealth, is doing its best to turn members of British intelligence and get the plans. Given that a lot of people in the SIS are unhappy with the Mosley government, the Soviets have many chances to buy a good turncoat or two. Unfortunately, there's a high turnover, these days, as many old-guard British spooks are being denounced as "counter-persons" by up and coming Blackshirts. More often than not, the USSR's new contacts are being locked up for treason before the Soviets can even get them to perform any!

There is also a small but notable group of well-connected British citizens – the Solitaires – who are concerned that the Mosley government is going too far and must be opposed. They are willing to pursue missions to undermine the slow march towards fascism, so long as they do nothing to harm King or Country.

One of their more notable members is Captain Poul Little, who flew the first storm bomb to Berlin and was never the same since. Little tells people he saw *something* in those clouds – something that made his tailgunner shriek and jump to his death, and turned his bombardier into a white-haired, raving lunatic. He maintains that it was a vision of the future, in which the entire world was engulfed in those damnable, hungry clouds. Little is willing to do anything to stop that future, even at the cost of his own life.

The Fortress of Ewe

The Experimental Weapons Group is bivouacked (some say "imprisoned") at a super-secure military base on the Isle of Ewe, in scenic Loch Ewe in the Scottish Highlands. It's about 37 miles away from their testing grounds on Gruinard Island, and remote enough to deter nosey types and foreign spies. Should that fail, the coastal town of Aultbea is crawling with guards masquerading as villagers, with orders to shoot to kill anyone who can't explain their presence in town to their satisfaction.

The 30 boffins of the EWG live, work, and sleep in the underground fortress – watched by cameras and guarded by unamused soldiers who'd rather be back in London. The scientists and engineers mostly work on various advanced weaponry and surveillance projects for the Empire: bigger guns, nastier gasses, "tele-visions" that watch their viewers – that sort of thing.

No one gets in or out without an armed escort, and no one's allowed off the island until the state of "national emergency" is over. It doesn't take a genius to see that the emergency won't be over anytime soon, but escape attempts are subject to summary execution.

The center attraction at the fortress is Dr. Wych's private laboratory. The storm bombs might be manufactured down in Glasgow, but they come up to the Isle of Ewe to be armed by Wych personally. Once a week a small, well-armed naval craft comes up and docks at the island gates. New bombs and supplies are rolled off, personnel are switched out, and armed bombs are placed on board. Then it's gone, and with it all contact with the outside.

Wych lives, works, and sleeps in his lab. When he leaves, it he fastidiously locks the heavy door, not even trusting the two guards who watch it at all times. He is the only one who's allowed to go where he wants without an escort, and has an annoying habit of vanishing around corners, or leaving his lab, only to exit from it a few hours later without being seen reentering it.

There is another potential ally, but few know about him just yet. His name is Professor Harry Grindell Matthews, also of the Experimental Weapons Group, and he hates Dr. Wych with something approaching obsession.

Matthews was all set to perfect a "death ray" for the war effort, but the success of the storm bomb diverted all funds and attention away from his own work. Now he sits and works on closed-circuit "tele-vision" cameras and high-powered microphones for Mosley's Blackshirts to put in the streets, and fumes over bad luck and lost chances.

If there was some way he could turn the tables on his rival without being done up for treason, he would do it in a heartbeat. Maybe someone will give him the chance.

Nothing Can Go Wrong Forever

The Infinity Patrol is *very* interested in Stormbomb-1, but what to do about this parallel has been a matter of lively debate. If they'd discovered it soon enough, they could have just captured Dr. Wych and destroyed his research. But now the problem has grown too large for abductions and explosions to solve, and will doubtlessly get worse with time.

It's not yet clear to Infinity whether Dr. Wych knows exactly what he's made, and what it could lead to. They're also not sure exactly *what* he is: those who go back in time to study his life have found critical areas where he simply *vanishes* from his timeline, though whether he Jumped or was taken is unknown. What happened while he was gone is also uncertain, which has led them to wonder if he was replaced by a parachronic with a mission, an Outtimer with ulterior motives, or something else.

They *have* learned that he has always armed all the bombs himself. Supposedly, no one knows how he does it, as he hasn't needed a refill of his initial, top-secret supplies since 1918. If true, then all Infinity may have to do is infiltrate the EWG, and snatch him away. However, there's no way to know for sure whether he's written anything down without talking to him, which won't happen until some time after they've taken him. Plus, someone may have spied on him from afar, and taken notes.

Another major concern is how stop the bombs from being used again. The fabric of time-space on Stormbomb-1 is dangerously thin in places, and a couple more detonations could rip it open like a paper bag. However, taking *all* the bombs away might plunge Britain deeper into paranoid fascism, so they'll have to use subtlety or sabotage, rather than outright theft.

They must also prevent the other governments on Stormbomb-1 from getting the technology. Normally, handing WMD plans over to other nations could fix the balance of power, and cool things down, but that's not a useful option here.

Then there's the question of what happens when Infinity takes Wych, and Britain runs out of storm bombs. If the Empire's unable to back up their threats, then anarchy, rebellion, and another global conflict could erupt. Worse, Britain may go into researching other, equally dangerous areas – such as atomic weaponry. With luck, Infinity can find a way to influence things so that the Empire peaceably crumbles within a few decades after Wych's disappearance, but it's going to be nerve-wracking.

Infinity's also very curious about the "ghosts" and attacks in storm-bombed areas. The current hypothesis is that opportunistic things are slipping through the holes in spacetime. ISWAT teams are being dispatched to such places in the hopes of witnessing such an occurrence, and perhaps stopping further ones.

Fortunately, at Quantum 4, Stormbomb-1 is too far away for Centrum to interfere with. Unfortunately, it's only a step away from Reich-5 (see p. 39). Given that it's the 1930s, it seems almost fitting that parachronic Nazis would be slinking into this parallel for their own malign purposes.

Keep the Candle Lit

Stormbomb-1 is wide open with possibilities for Infinity Patrol campaigns. There are many ways of stopping Dr. Wych, undermining the manufacture and maintenance of the storm bombs, and stopping other countries from getting the secret. There's also an entire new parallel to explore, with all the fascinating locales, historical characters, and dangerous intrigue that can provide.

Whichever way the campaign takes the heroes, they will have to be very careful how they go. The postwar period on Homeline was a massive powder-keg, and for as much as this world's history has changed, the major players in fascist Europe are still here, waiting for push to come to shove. Hopefully, Infinity can protect both the Secret *and* this parallel's future.

Cauterization

Homeline has recruited a handful of British soldiers who are about to be assigned to the Isle of Ewe. They believe they are on a top-secret mission to test out the island's security, and have been ordered to find a way to break into Wych's lab, spirit him away, and search for the plans – if any. This is going to be quite an undertaking, but they've been given some "experimental" nonlethal gear to help. Should they succeed, the Infinity Patrol will either be on the weekly boat or the shore, depending on the plan, and ready to take Wych and the soldiers away.

Instigation

A group of Time Scouts is helping the Solitaries. They are taking steps to keep Poul Little safe, as well as help him refine his ideas into something that might unify the Empire should the current government fall. They will have to be on their guard, though: Cameras are watching, recording devices are everywhere, and any number of seemingly sincere recruits and old hands could be spies or just out for themselves.

Exfiltration

The Time Scouts were just making a psychosocial survey of London when they ran afoul of some Blackshirts for not having "proper papers," and had to leg it – missing their pickup in the process. Now they're trying to sneak around a city with a million potential spies, video cameras on every street corner, and the police looking for *them.* Another group is supposed to rendezvous and help get them out, but can they survive in the meantime? What if they get caught?

Expectation

Small but potent ISWAT teams are lurking in Berlin, Vienna, and Constantinople, keeping an eye out for the strange attacks. They've been able to pinpoint where the attacks are most likely to happen, based on past occurrences, and each group has a parachronic detector and the ability to roll out as soon as it goes crazy.

Hopefully, they will be more than a match for 20-30 murder-minded Reich-5 Shadow Commandoes armed with brutal, high-tech bladed weapons. A better question will be if they can learn that the attacks are a distraction. How will they react when they follow the Reich's ambassadors to the doorsteps of men who were the chief architects of the Third Reich on Homeline? What will they do, then?

Investigation

While the ISWAT teams are waiting for their parachronic detectors to go crazy, scientists from Parachronic Laboratories are in the same cities, surreptitiously trying to determine where the victims of the storm bombs may have gone. They're hoping to get a bearing the next time there's an attack, as the parachronic signatures from the actual bombs have decayed so much as to be nearly useless.

Should they get the bearing they want, the next step will be to load up their conveyor, program coordinates, and make a quantum jump. But how will they handle arriving on *Rache-Welt* (see p. 39), which is now crawling with Reich-5 operatives, intent on turning it into a militarized stepping-stone onto this planet? How will this shocking development change Infinity's long-term plans for Stormbomb-1?

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.

Random Thought Table

Forget It!

by Steven Marsh, *Pyramid* Editor

Sometime around 1999 or 2000, I saw a panel at Dragon Con where White Wolf Publishing creators were plugging the forthcoming ***Adventure!*** roleplaying game. This game was the third in the Trinity Universe, following on the futuristic science-fiction setting of ***Trinity*** and the super-powered exploits of ***Aberrant*** (which took place in the impossible near-future world of 2008). ***Adventure!*** was a cliffhangers-type game set in 1925, and posited a fairly high-action steampunk-esque pulp view of the universe. (The teaser ad at the back of ***Aberrant*** had a fake newspaper headline of "Dr. Zorbo Attacks City With Zeppelin Armada.") As a fan of the ***Aberrant*** universe at the time, I noted that there was no mention of 1920s exploits in that book, and the appearance of masked super-powered individuals seems to have taken the world by storm in ***Aberrant's*** 2008, even though it had happened before – to a lesser extent – in the 1920s. I asked the panelists how we (as players) could reconcile the seeming inconsistency that no one seems to recall the time President Coolidge was attacked by a giant robot. One guy on the panel – whose name eludes me – sighed, looked contemplative, and said, "You know, people have such short memories . . ." Big laugh.

Still, as my present day has vowed to eclipse the near-future of ***Aberrant,*** this line has stuck with me. People *do* have short memories. Historical tendencies and political positions tend to get forgotten and refought. "Life hacks" frequently contain "secret" tips that were common knowledge a generation or two ago. Popular music will *always* be corrupting our youth.

This tendency to forget is integral to popular culture. This accounts for the Golden Age of comics' predilection for reprinting stories near-verbatim after a couple of years – perhaps with only minor art tweaks or lettering changes to make the hero a new character. It factors into themes and storytelling techniques that resurface every few years. (Are we about due to have an aged master teach a hardscrabble young pupil to be a hero?) And it features strongly into soap-opera and comic heroes' inability to remember events from over the years: "This guy has kidnapped you and your friends *three times;* why would you agree to a private meeting with him?!"

This need to forget can be a valuable aspect for games with a widespread or potentially complex continuity, like the ***GURPS Infinite Worlds*** setting. It keeps players and the GM from being beholden to story developments that seemed like a good idea at the time, but just aren't going anywhere now. Here, then, are a few ideas for using a limited or selective memory in a campaign.

The Window of Memory

If you're running or playing in a campaign that's expected to continue for a while, it can be useful to establish a timeframe that the expected heroes (and the universe) are expected to remember. As a couple of ideas:

- **One year** (or two years, or some other concrete measure of time in the real gamers' world).
- **Four storylines** (or a similar number of discrete storytelling units). If a campaign has story arcs – comprising several adventures apiece – it might work to say that nothing will be directly referred to that is older than a certain number of those larger arcs.
- **Through the previous GM.** In a campaign that rotates GMs – which is loads of fun for some groups and is something you should consider doing at least once – it can make sense to only retain explicit memory that extends backward through the *previous* GM. Thus, if Alice starts the campaign, hands it over to Bob, who then hands it over to Carol, during Carol's run the players only need to worry about events that happened during Carol's and Bob's tours.

What does this ability to "forget" mean? Well, here are some examples.

- Any interpersonal subplots that were unresolved *before* the "memory window" now evaporate without additional effect. If beloved Aunt Clara was in danger of losing her home unless the heroes came up with enough money, and the subplot fell off the players' radars, then when she is part of the story again, there doesn't need to be any mention of her previous woes.
- Similarly, long-term personal-development goals that aren't actively pursued to completion are presumed to reset to logical(-ish) stopping point. Was an NPC (or hero!) working on the third year of his doctorate program? Then he's *still* on the third year of his doctorate next year.

● The world won't react any differently to any plots that are superficially similar to previous adventures. If Agent Schwa is planning on unleashing a viral agent over the city's skies, then the similar attack planned by Doctor Von Ebola for the city's water supplies years ago resulted in *no* increased healthcare resources, epidemic containment units, etc. If New York City was devastated by an attack by the Egyptian gods 14 months ago, then an alien attack on that city today won't be viewed with any more suspicion or bewilderment by the populace because of that same history. And so on. (This would explain why people continue to live in Metropolis or Gotham City . . .)

What does the campaign get for having a limited window of memory? First, it's easier to bring in new players. A sense of "what's important" is much simpler to give newbies if there's only the immutable past (see below) and the window of memory to worry about. Second – and perhaps most important for a setting like ***Infinite Worlds*** – the campaign world will remain more static than "the real world" would in similar circumstances. A gaming world with any kind of high-profile incidents – either realized or thwarted by heroes – would almost certainly be unrecognizable after a few years *unless* the setting had selective amnesia. A 2001 attack on the United States that would be considered relatively middling compared to most Hollywood- (or RPG-) style world-spanning plotlines has permanently changed the country's life; the cost for the Department of Homeland Security has been hundreds of billions of dollars for the first decade after 2001, and we'll probably always need to remove our shoes before boarding a plane from now on.

In the Infinite Worlds setting, there are many worlds where there's some variation of "if such-and-such comes to pass, it'll be a major headache for Homeline." With a narrow memory window, if you unleash one of these potential headaches, you don't need to worry about it being an ongoing concern until the end of days (unless the group wants that, of course).

"But It's Not Realistic!"

True, the real world doesn't tend to "forget" what's important. It seems to strain a bit of incredulity to have important plot points and game-world developments just fade away. And yet, this is honestly how it works for many aspects of the *real* world.

A few years ago there were breathless stories about how foreign interests were spending outrageous sums to buy up America, the undercurrent of which was "How much of the country are we willing to sell to foreigners?" Nowadays, those stories are nearly nonexistent. Killer bees were a pants-wetting threat in the 1970s, populating the collective unconsciousness of *In Search Of . . . , Saturday Night Live,* and everything in between. Nowadays killer bees – while certainly a problem at times – just aren't the presumptive end of the universe. And has anyone heard a Mad Cow Disease story in the past few years?

In the real world, many threats – even seemingly end-of-the-world ones – can just fade away. Perhaps it wasn't as big a deal as it seemed at the time. Perhaps outside forces that aren't obvious to the heroes took care of the situation. Regardless, it's entirely in keeping with the flavor of reality for "plot threads" to just fade away . . .

The Immutable Past

A memory window is easier to enforce if there is an "immutable past" the group can acknowledge and adhere to. For commercial settings, this is the core rulebook or setting guide for the campaign. In ***Infinite Worlds,*** this includes ideas about the main factions: Homeline, the Infinity Patrol, Centrum, Reich-5, etc. For other settings, this could also include elements of the hero's origins ("Rocketed to Earth as a child, the alien exile from a doomed planet . . .") or specific elements of the campaign's premise ("You are part of a group within the Infinity Patrol whose purpose is to catalog the most unusual or dangerous of timelines and determine what can be learned from them . . .").

The immutable past serves the role of elements that will not change without significant input and assent from the players. They also serve as a baseline to "reset" the campaign to if things get *too* odd. Have the players gotten bored of fighting the militaristic Reich-5 invasion of our reality, and want to revert back to basics? No worries; all the players have the same idea of what the immutable past is and can "revert" to it without concern . . . and thanks to the memory window, once Reich-5 Invasion isn't mentioned for long enough, no one needs to worry that it'll be an ongoing concern again.

The Immediately Forgotten

Finally, some storylines are so disruptive – or hated by players – that it's in the campaign's best interests to forget them with all due haste. Figure out how to revert back to the immutable past as fast as possible, and rely on a quickly invoked memory window to close up any lingering issues:

"Weren't we involved with an ongoing doppelgänger saga where conspirators could be anywhere?"

"Y'know, we deal with so much stuff, sometimes it's best not to worry about it . . . anyway, on to adventure!"

(This is more-or-less exactly how the Federation-shattering events of the *Star Trek: The Next Generation* episode "Conspiracy" were "resolved": Yep, there are possibly body-snatching aliens in our chain of command . . . oh, well.)

Memory is what we agree it is. Whether it's a family's agreement to never again mention the Thanksgiving Futon Incident or a gaming group's reluctance to allow past adventures to disrupt the tales they want to run, so long as the participants know the ground rules of what will be remembered, things can go swimmingly. In fact, keeping such tactics in mind can lead to a game that's *unforgettable* . . .

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.

Odds and Ends

The Secret in the Storm

by J. Edward Tremlett

Stormbomb-1 (see pp. 32-36) has more than parachronic problems; Reich-5 is well-placed to exploit that parallel for its own sinister ends. Indeed, Reich-5 *is* on the scene, already, but how they got there – and what they want with Stormbomb-1 – is quite the tale.

> *What affects men sharply about a foreign nation is not so much finding or not finding familiar things; it is rather not finding them in the familiar place.*
>
> *– G.K. Chesterton*

About three years ago, a group of the Reich's explorers came across an empty world where human life had not developed. They were in the midst of surveying it for mineral exploitation when they came across a very large settlement full of modern humans. Strangely enough, they spoke German.

This was New Berlin, filled with over a million people who claimed to have come from Berlin and Vienna in 1918. Their leaders told the Reich's explorers of the *sturm-bombe*, and how every single person within the resulting clouds was transported to this place, here, along with the entirety of the Reichstag.

They found this place to be devoid of signs of civilization (other than a herd of poorly cared-for sheep) and began to build a new life. That process was somewhat complicated when the entire population of Vienna suddenly appeared three days later, along with the Prater Ferris Wheel. A year later, the entirety of Constantinople arrived, along with one of their places of Mohammedan worship. However, those newcomers weren't in a mood to help, and the displaced Germans let them leave to make their own way.

That was 11 years ago. Since then, the residents had adapted to this new world as best as they could. They remained confident that they could overcome whatever had happened to them. Every so often, they got a new "personfall" of foreigners, mostly from Asia and the Middle East. From them, they heard stories from home. From the sounds of things, they were better off here.

The Reich explorers were agog at the notion that someone had developed a way to weaponize banestorms. Back on Reich-5, the news was received with desire and a measure of trepidation. The Reich needed to have this weapon, and the persons who used it on their proud, parallel forebears needed to be taught a lesson. Surely their advanced science could find a way to make this happen!

Thus began the utilization of this planet, which they code-named *Rache-Welt* (Vengeance World). They brought in supplies, tools, and weapons for the displaced Germans, and began conducting experiments on the non-Germans. In time, the Reich's scientists learned how to use them as living lodestones, utilizing those poor souls to remote-sense areas that had been storm-bombed, and send their jumpers there. They, and whomever they took with them, can operate there as long as the lodestone lives (usually an hour), and then they fade back to *Rache-Welt,* like phantoms.

As of now, the *Schatten-Kommandos* are engaged in terror tactics in storm-bombed cities, meant to disguise their true mission. While the Commandos rage and kill targets of opportunity, Reich-5 explorers make clandestine contact with the sort of people they can work with. They hope that these persons can engage in espionage within the British government, and help them in their quest to steal the plans for the storm bomb.

The most delicious detail for the Reich is *who* they are dealing with. It just so happens that, on Stormbomb-1, Adolph Hitler is a duplicitous civil servant in Berlin: serving his English masters by day, and quietly fomenting the seeds of eventual revolution at night. He has been happy to let these new friends use his numerous contacts throughout Occupied Europe, especially his sympathizers in the British government.

Spells, Prayers, and More

The *Simultaneous Spells* (p. 5) rule for alternative abilities is particularly applicable to the framework of ***GURPS Powers: Divine Favor.*** A paragon who pays full price for his most powerful learned prayer can then maintain one learned prayer while invoking a second prayer (learned or otherwise), and so on.

GURPS Dungeon Fantasy offers a second option: In *Pyramid #3/50: Dungeon Fantasy II* (p. 18), *Saintly Power-Ups* suggests accomplishing the same thing via Dual Prayers, a new trait based on a variant interpretation of Compartmentalized Mind. If the GM wishes, he may use Dual Prayers instead of the alternative-ability rules here; it's simpler, though less guaranteed to produce balanced costs and results. Regardless, Dual Prayers is specific to ***Dungeon Fantasy;*** in all other games, use the new rules from *Simultaneous Spells.*

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