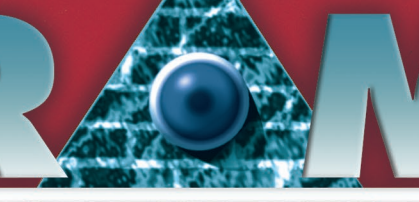


PYRAMID[®]



Issue 3/90 April '16

AFTER THE END



ARE WE NOT MEN?

by Jason "PK" Levine

ROBOTS AFTER THE END
by Roger Burton West

**WARPING MONSTERS
INTO MUTANTS**
by Peter V. Dell'Orto

THE MERCY DOLLS
by David L. Pulver

SURVIVAL AT THE END
by Christopher R. Rice

GOOD OLD DAYS
by Matt Riggsby

STEVE JACKSON GAMES

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ARTICLE COLORS

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

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

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Coming upon the scene with force of a thousand-megaton bomb, *GURPS After the End* has arrived – and the world will never be the same! *Pyramid* builds upon that foundation with our first issue devoted to bolstering your *After the End* campaign.

Changed as we have been by the end times into twisted, powerful forms, sometimes we look into the mirror and ask ourselves, *Are We Not Men?* Jason "PK" Levine – mastermind behind the *GURPS After the End* series – expands the variety of mutations possible with over two dozen new options. Roll randomly on the table or select your options . . . then use the included list of suggested ways for Freakishness to manifest itself!

GURPS Reign of Steel: Will to Live updated the classic *GURPS Reign of Steel* campaign to *GURPS Fourth Edition* game mechanics. Now Roger Burton West – author of *Will to Live* – looks at the dangers of *Robots After the End*. Tap *GURPS After the End 2: The New World* for adventure ideas and obstacle mechanics specific to each zone, plus check out the guidelines for bringing *Reign of Steel* robots to an *After the End* – including one sample robot update.

The Mercy Dolls – friend or foe? That depends on how sick you are! In this issue's Eidetic Memory, David L. Pulver – *GURPS Y2K* contributor – describes an *After the End* setting utterly altered by an incurable disease. Learn about two key factions trying to restore civilization and the android-caretakers programmed to destroy the virus by any means necessary.

With only a few mechanical tweaks and a name swap, you too can begin *Warping Monsters Into Mutants*. Peter V. Dell'Orto – co-author of *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy Monsters 1* – shows you how to transform the creatures from the *Dungeon Fantasy* series into beings suitable for any over-the-top post-apocalyptic campaign, including three sample adaptations to inflict upon your wasteland warriors!

Sometimes living through the day requires more than battling crazies; for quieter times, you need to know about *Survival at the End*. Prolific *Pyramid* contributor Christopher R. Rice adds new and expanded details to the survival tactics presented in *The New World*, including farming, trap-setting, fishing, hunting, water purification, and fire-starting. Plus, add realistic details with the suggestions for gear substitutions.

This month's Random Thought Table provides an epic conundrum suitable for adding to any post-apocalyptic campaign, while Short Bursts presents a vignette about future nostalgia in the forthcoming *Car Wars* universe. With *After the End* and *Pyramid*, tomorrow is just beginning!

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FROM THE EDITOR

LET'S TALK ABOUT THE APOCALYPSE

Helping to guide a roleplaying game line is like engaging in a conversation. We release something new and cool. The fans pick it up and start doing interesting and innovative things. We notice and see what we can do to help them with fresh goodies or add-ons. The audience gives their thoughts about those items, and the cycle continues.

I was reminded of this process as we've seen an explosion of activity on the forums thanks to the recent unveiling of *GURPS After the End*. Its arrival was foretold two months ago with *Pyramid* #3/88: *The End Is Nigh*, followed shortly by the release of *GURPS After the End 1: Wastelanders* and *GURPS After the End 2: The New World*. This issue thus concludes the immediate rush of official material for your post-apocalyptic needs.

Yet, as I write these words, fans are already making the *After the End* series their own. There are ideas for pushing it to new realms, campaign settings, rule tweaks, and even using the game mechanics outside of a traditional post-apocalyptic campaign.

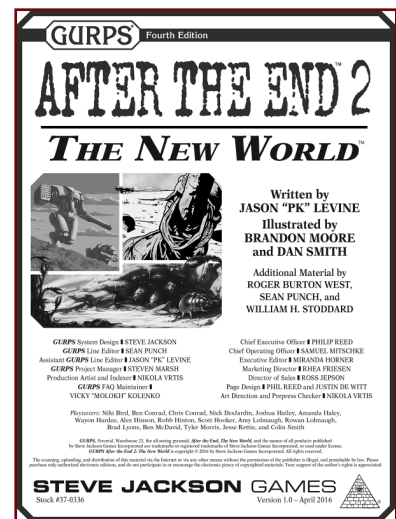
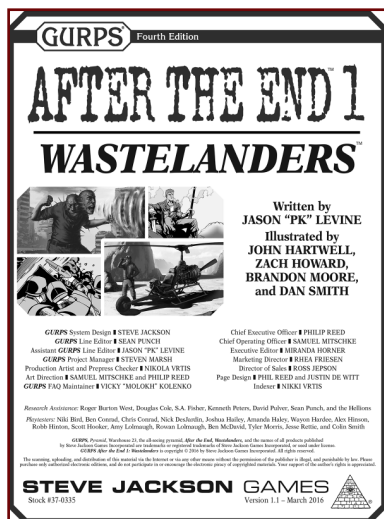
There have also been ideas for desired follow-ups. We can't promise that all of those will see the light of day, but I will note that at least once or twice I said, "Oooh! I'd love to see that supplement myself!"

Not all suggestions are destined to be full-fledged supplements, of course. Some ultimately will find fruition here in the pages of *Pyramid*. Many an article began life with a query letter stating, "I've noticed on the forums that some people are really interested in . . ."

This issue of *Pyramid* wraps up our contribution to opening a discussion of fast-paced pick-up-and-play post-apocalyptic gaming. Its star-studded contents offer lots of material that can find life in an *After the End* campaign (or beyond!). Now, we see what you think of what we've done, and go from there.

WRITE HERE, WRITE NOW

As we noted above, we love to hear from you! What do you think of this bold, new world of post-apocalyptic gaming? What would you like to see more of, or where should we go from here? Let us know via private short-wave textual radio directed to pyramid@sjgames.com, or join the *GURPS* gang gathered at forums.sjgames.com.



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ARE WE NOT MEN?

BY JASON “PK” LEVINE

While not every post-apocalyptic setting features mutants, they're a common addition. Something about once-familiar beings, twisted and “evolved” into new forms, evokes the feeling that the world has truly changed. So *GURPS After the End 1: Wastelanders* clearly needed rules for mutated characters, though I kept that chapter short (just three pages) as I knew it wouldn't appeal to *all* groups. Not everyone enjoys the rubber science behind mutation, but for those who do – for those who want even *more* Freakishness in their lives – the ash-blackened sky is the limit!

This article expands the mutations from pp. 25-27 of *Wastelanders*, and adds the ability to generate them randomly (to simplify NPC creation and the effects of mutagen). This does not mean that they *have* to be random! The GM may roll or choose, and players always decide which mutations their characters begin with. For later in the game, see *Continued Evolution* (p. 12).

*Spare change, old friend, old pal?
Can you help a poor mutant down
on his luck?*

– Harold, in *Fallout*

RANDOM MUTATIONS

To choose a mutation randomly, first pick a mutation category or roll 1d twice on the following table:

First Roll	Second Roll	Mutation Type
1-2	1-4	Attack
	5-6	Defense
3-4	1-4	Movement
	5-6	Defense
5-6	1-5	Sensory
	6	Morphology

Alternatively, to generate dangerous mutant NPCs, add one defense, then one attack, and then roll 1d: (1) add a morphology mutation; (2-3) add a movement mutation; (4-5) add a sensory mutation; (6) reroll twice (add another roll each time this comes up). Repeat the “defense, attack, roll a die” pattern until you reach the NPC's point budget for mutations.

To randomly narrow a category down to a specific mutation, consult the appropriate section and roll 1d twice, reading

the results in order. If an ability comes up twice, apply a higher level if possible, otherwise reroll. The Freakishness for each mutation is listed after its point cost; e.g., “8 points (FR 2)” means this mutation costs 8 character points (including the discount for Freakishness) and adds 2 to the mutant's overall Freakishness score.

ATTACK MUTATIONS

When creating a new attack, the GM should ensure that its benefits are mixed with a few drawbacks or significant limitations; mutations shouldn't feel like boundless “super powers.” Existing examples follow this: Acidic Blood has short range and requires the user to be injured, Bellow Lungs are fatiguing and cannot injure anyone, Bone Spur isn't much more effective than a good weapon, and so on.

1, 1-2 – Acidic Blood. 21 points (FR 4).

See *Wastelanders*, p. 26.

Suggested Oddities: boils or welts (on skin); green or gray hue to skin; sharp “chemical” smell to body odor.

1, 3-5 – Bellow Lungs. 13 points (FR 2).

See *Wastelanders*, p. 26.

Suggested Oddities: chest sacs (that inflate when using this); hole in the neck or chest (extra intake valve); wheezing or whistling sound while speaking.

1, 6 or 2, 1 – Blinding Spray. 21 points (FR 4).

You can spray a narrow jet of blinding poison at a single foe up to five yards away. Decide when taking this mutation whether it emits from your mouth or from a dedicated, concealed sphincter on your body. This costs you 1 FP and requires a DX (at -4) or Innate Attack (Breath) roll to aim. You do not suffer range penalties or hit location penalties; this ability is built assuming that you'll target the face.

If the victim fails to dodge or block, he must roll against HT or be blinded for (margin of failure)×2 seconds. He rolls at +3 if he's further than two yards away, and he adds any DR from eye protection or Nictitating Membrane to the roll.

Statistics: Affliction 1 (HT; Blockable, -5%; Costs Fatigue, 1 FP, -5%; Disadvantage, Blindness, +50%; Jet, +0%; Reduced Duration, ×1/30, -30%; Reduced Range, ×1/2, -10%; Vision-Based, Variant, +150%) [25] + Freakishness 4 [-4].

Suggested Oddities: glassy eyes (a vestigial membrane); spray glands partially fill your mouth; visible sphincter.

2, 2-4 – Bone Spur. 14 points (FR 3).

See *Wastelanders*, p. 26. Treat your spear-like spur as a weapon for all purposes; you are not considered to be making an unarmed attack or parry.

Suggested Oddities: perfectly straight scar or ridge running down the arm; unusual elbow protrusion; wrist exit wound that won't heal.

2, 5-6 – Calcium Dart. 9 points (FR 2).

Your body produces sharp calcium deposits on your bones. You can launch these at your enemies – though doing so costs you 1 HP of injury per dart as it rips through your flesh! Treat this as a standard ranged attack, aimed with DX at -4 or Innate Attack (Projectile): 2d-1 pi+, Acc 3, Range 10/100, RoF 1, Rcl 1. The dart is subsonic: -4 to rolls to hear it.

Statistics: Large Piercing Attack 2d-1 (Costs Hit Points, 1 HP, -10%; Low Signature, +10%) [11] + Freakishness 2 [-2].

Suggested Oddities: countless identical scars; deformed skull (from calcium buildup); pointed protrusions under your flesh.

3, 1-2 – Cryogenic Kiss. 26 points (FR 6).

You can lower the temperature of your breath to nearly absolute zero. Spend 1 FP to attack using DX (at -4) or Innate Attack (Breath); you inflict 2d(5) burning damage up to one yard away, or 1d(5) out to two yards. This is “freezer burn”; it cannot start fires.

Against a foe who breathes, a successful attack to his face (at -5 to hit) means that he *inhales* the frigid air (unless he has Filter Lungs or was holding his breath). An inhaled attack ignores DR *and* forces the subject to succeed at a HT roll or be paralyzed for (margin of failure)×2 seconds!

Statistics: Affliction 1 (HT; Accessibility, Only to follow respiratory attack, -10%; Follow-Up, -20%; Paralysis, +150%; Reduced Duration, ×1/30, -30%) [19] + Burning Attack 2d (Alternative Enhancements, Armor Divisor (5) or Respiratory Agent, +60%; Costs Fatigue, 1 FP, -5%; Jet, +0%; No Incendiary Effect, -10%; Reduced Range, ×1/5, -20%) [13] + Freakishness 6 [-6].

Suggested Oddities: bluish lips and tongue; icy teeth; visibly frosty breath (unless the game is set in a winter wonderland, where that's normal).

3, 3-4 – Electrified Skin. 24 points (FR 4).

See *Wastelanders*, p. 26.

Suggested Oddities: faint crackling sound accompanying either movement *or* speech; lighting or circuit-board skin pattern; small spark when touching something.

3, 5 – Immolation. 25 points (FR 5).

Your pores exude a clear, odorless, extremely flammable gas, with enough pressure to maintain a constant cloud around you. This dissipates quickly, breaking down as it floats away from your body, but if ignited (see p. 6), it turns into a flaming aura that does 2d burning damage to anyone touching you or vice versa. The natural gas pressure keeps the flames from burning *you*; the aura floats just outside of your clothing or armor. *Sealed* armor traps your gas, however, making this ability useless. This buffer gives you and your carried gear an extra DR 8 against flame attacks (but this does not apply to heat, lasers, electricity, etc. – only to open flames).

ODDITIES

Each mutation here includes suggested oddities – minor physical deformities or “tells” hinting at the mutant’s capabilities. Don’t make the mistake of taking exactly one oddity for every ability! Instead, choose or invent one for every full six points of Freakishness (regardless of how many mutations it took you to reach that level), using the oddities listed for your mutations as inspiration.

Within reason, several smaller oddities can be combined into a larger one, usually by applying multiple deformities to one body type; *Wastelanders* gives the example of “bulging, yellow eyes,” which count as two oddities. With GM permission, players may even choose a single deformity which counts as two or three on its own; e.g., a mutant with Freakishness 18 may have solid-black eyes, good for +3 to rolls to detect his mutations and -3 to Disguise and Shadowing. For even more obvious tells, see the optional rule below.

Concealing Oddities

By definition, an oddity must be something that cannot be easily hidden, if only because it's unfair to let an adventurer save points via Freakishness and then avoid the repercussions. Going to extremes to conceal them (e.g., wearing a huge hat to hide a head bump or speaking through teeth to contain a forked tongue) can be as much of a “tell” as the oddity itself; use the rules as written. For some mutations, it instead makes sense that they *can't* be concealed and still work properly; e.g., Soft Step (p. 8) may *require* a furry-footed mutant to go barefoot to get the Stealth bonus. Or the GM can get creative: “Yes, you’ve managed to cover up your oddities, but the swaddling makes you look sinister (-1 to reactions) and is physically awkward (-1 to Dodge and other rolls requiring sudden movement).”

As an *optional* rule, the GM may allow a mutant to take one “concealable oddity.” This is a deformity that can be hidden completely, without causing other problems. However, if it is revealed (and the GM is *encouraged* to throw challenges at the mutant to make this risk real), it is so blatant and eye-catching that anyone looking immediately realizes that the possessor is a mutant *and* what mutation is tied to this oddity! Players should assume that this option is *not* available unless the GM explicitly says so.

Example: Mouse’s Bone Spur (above) retracts into a thick, bony carapace that envelops the underside of her forearm. Anyone looking at her bare arm will realize that she is a mutant with a Bone Spur, but she can conceal it with simple long sleeves. The GM keeps things interesting by rolling to see if the sleeve rips when enemies grapple her arm, when she falls, when she runs through a thicket, and so on.

You do not have any special ability to ignite the gas; you or a friend must strike a flame or flint near your body, as though turning on a gas grill. After using it, you must concentrate for a second and succeed at a HT roll to momentarily turn off the gas, extinguishing the flames. As a side effect of this, if you are ever in contact with open flame or struck by a flame attack, your aura ignites automatically! (Fortunately, your DR 8 kicks in quickly enough to apply to that attack.) If you're in a situation where you need this not to happen (e.g., you think someone might toss a match at you to see if you're a mutant), you can suppress the gas production, but this requires constant concentration and is fatiguing; roll against HT every 10 minutes or lose 1 FP.

This is also a defense mutation.

Statistics: Burning Attack 2d (Aura, +80%; Melee Attack, Reach C, -30%; Nuisance Effect, Requires porous clothing, -5%; Uncontrollable Trigger, Flame, -30%) [12] + DR 8 (Force Field, +20%; Limited, Open Flame, -60%; Nuisance Effect, Requires porous clothing, -5%; Uncontrollable Trigger, Flame, -10%) [18] + Freakishness 5 [-5]. *Notes:* As a special effect, the aura requires flame to use but its uncontrollable nature can be suppressed with effort.

Suggested Oddities: burned skin; greatly enlarged pores; the gas is somewhat odorous or visible.

*The Rippers are a demonic army
of bloodthirsty, human eating,
purse snatchin', mutant creatures.*

– Dr. Blockhead, in Tank Girl

3, 6 or 4, 1-2 – Mighty Roar. 21 points (FR 4).

See *Wastelanders*, p. 26. Targets with Hard of Hearing resist at +4 (not cumulative with the +5 from Protected Hearing).

Suggested Oddities: massive chest; raspy voice; wide, almost funnel-shaped mouth.

4, 3-4 – Nerve Gas. 24 points (FR 5).

Once per hour, you can force your pores to expel a small cloud of respiratory nerve gas; this costs you 1 FP. It forms a two-yard-radius cloud around you that drifts with the wind and lingers for about 10 seconds before fading. Everyone who breathes the gas (except you) must roll HT-5 or take 2d toxic damage; if this costs a victim 2/3 HP or more, he is also paralyzed until he heals above that threshold!

Statistics: Immunity to Own Gas [1] + Toxic Attack 2d (Area Effect, 2 yards, +50%; Costs Fatigue, 1 FP, -5%; Drifting, +20%; Emanation, -20%; Persistent, +40%; Resistible, HT-5, -5%; Respiratory Agent, +50%; Symptoms, 2/3 HP, Paralysis, +150%; Takes Recharge, One Hour, -30%) [28] + Freakishness 5 [-5].

Suggested Oddities: dark, prominent pores; obviously discolored veins and arteries; sallow complexion.

4, 5-6 – Nuclear Core. 30 points (FR 6).

See *Wastelanders*, p. 26. If radiation is not a serious hazard in the campaign, or radiation is completely unrelated to mutation, this may not be an appropriate mutation; if rolling randomly, reroll it.

Suggested Oddities: no fingernails (an adaptation to the radiation); protruding, pulsing veins and arteries; slightly glowing eyes.

5, 1-3 – Razor Claws. 11 points (FR 2).

See *Wastelanders*, p. 26. Your claws are not long enough to improve Reach or count as a weapon; they just aid your unarmed attacks. *Parrying Unarmed* (pp. B376-377) thus applies. You never have to sprout claws from all of your limbs at once; you can choose to extend claws from just one hand or even one finger.

Suggested Oddities: oversized hands and feet; thick, pointed nails; twitchy extremities.

5, 4-5 – Snakebite. 23 points (FR 5).

When you bite someone, you can inject poison into his bloodstream. The victim must roll against HT-3 immediately or take 2d toxic damage. This repeats every minute until he succeeds (which stops the progression) or 10 minutes has passed. If he loses 2/3 HP or more from this poison, he is at -3 to DX and IQ for all purposes until he heals above that threshold.

Snakebite is almost always accompanied by Toothsome (below). If Snakebite comes up when rolling random mutations, roll an extra 1d; on a 1-4, add Toothsome as well (treat them as a single mutation). Without Toothsome, you still have retractable "fangs," but they're so small and needle-like that your bite just does crushing damage.

Statistics: Toxic Attack 2d (Cyclic, 1 minute, 11 cycles, Resistible, +200%; Follow-Up, Bite, +0%; Resistible, HT-3, -15%; Symptoms, 2/3 HP, -3 DX and IQ, +60%) [28] + Freakishness 5 [-5].

Suggested Oddities: cheek bulges (hiding poison sacs); forked tongue; mottled skin.

5, 6 or 6, 1-3 – Super-Strength. 13 or 11.5 points/level (FR 2/level).

See *Wastelanders*, p. 26.

Suggested Oddities: additional muscle groups (new ones that normal humans lack); swollen, steroid-like muscles; unusually squat, wide body.

6, 4-5 – Toothsome. 3 points (FR 1).

See *Wastelanders*, p. 26.

Suggested Oddities: extra teeth; slurred speech; teeth that shift position.

6, 6 – X-Ray Specs. See p. 12.

This is also a sensory mutation.

DEFENSE MUTATIONS

As with attacks, these abilities should be helpful but limited – giving useful bonuses (not immunities), reducing damage to the mutant (without making him invulnerable), and so on.

1, 1-2 – Adaptable Skin 1-2. 8 or 16 points (FR 2 or 4).

See *Wastelanders*, p. 26. Level 1 gives +2 to Stealth rolls (to remain unseen) when moving or +4 when still; reduce either bonus by 2 when wearing noncamouflaged clothing. Level 2 doubles these bonuses as well as the clothing penalty. When rolling randomly, roll another 1d for the level: (1-4) level 1; (5-6) level 2.

Suggested Oddities: hair color matches skin color exactly; skin constantly shifts in subtle ways (can't turn it completely off); skin is an odd shade when not in use.

1, 3-4 – Boosted Hemoglobin. 8 points (FR 2).

See *Wastelanders*, p. 27. Holding your breath lets you avoid inhaling fallout particles; this halves your rate of RP loss in most radioactive areas, though not from exposed reactors, bombs, medical equipment, etc. If you also have Environmental Filter (below), quarter the rate.

Suggested Oddities: constant nosebleeds; deep red tinge to skin; protrusions over your ribcage.

1, 5 – Catlike Grace. 21 points (FR 4).

Your inner ear is adapted for balance and spatial awareness. You can run along tightropes, narrow beams, etc. at no penalty. If the surface is slippery, you must make appropriate skill or DX roll, but at +6. And if you *do* fall, you reduce the effective damage by five yards and may roll against DX (at the same +6) to take half damage. In combat, you get +4 on all rolls to keep your feet. You have +1 to Acrobatics, Climbing, and Piloting.

This is also a movement mutation.

Statistics: Catfall [10] + Perfect Balance [15] + Freakishness 4 [-4].

Suggested Oddities: large bumps below the ears (overdeveloped inner ears); long fingers and toes; vestigial tail.

1, 6 or 2, 1 – Environmental Filter. 18 points (FR 4).

Your eyes, pores, and orifices are protected by a thin membrane which stops all respiratory and contact threats. You can handle toxic chemicals with your bare hands and breathe comfortably in a cloud of nerve gas! If your eyes are attacked

by more conventional means, they have DR 2 and get +2 to all HT rolls concerned with eye damage. This membrane is normally not visible, unless an oddity changes that.

Because fallout particles don't make it into your lungs nor lodge on your body, you lose RP at half the normal rate in most radioactive areas, though not from exposed reactors, bombs, medical equipment, etc. If you *also* have Boosted Hemoglobin (*Wastelanders*, p. 27), quarter your RP loss rate while using it.

Statistics: Filter Lungs [5] + Nictitating Membrane 2 [2] + Sealed [15] + Freakishness 4 [-4].

Suggested Oddities: foggy eyes; shallow, rapid breathing; webbed nostrils.

2, 2-3 – Flesh Pocket. 4 points (FR 1).

See *Wastelanders*, p. 27.

Suggested Oddities: pocket causes a bulge; pocket's seam is visible; wrinkled skin.

2, 4 – Immolation. See pp. 5-6.

This is also an attack mutation.

2, 5-6 – Natural Anti-Rad 1-3. 8, 12, or 16 points (FR 2, 3, or 4).

See *Wastelanders*, p. 27. When rolling randomly, roll another 1d for the level: (1-3) level 1; (4-5) level 2; (6) level 3. If radiation is not a serious hazard in the campaign, reroll this mutation.

Suggested Oddities: bleeding gums; blotchy skin; patches of missing hair.

3, 1-2 – Prickly. 3 points (FR 1).

See *Wastelanders*, p. 27.

Suggested Oddities: bumps under the skin (where the spine tips are); scars in a perfectly regular pattern across your body; visible spine exit holes.

3, 3-5 – Redundant Organs. 16 points (FR 4).

See *Wastelanders*, p. 27. Also see *Injury to Unliving, Homogenous, and Diffuse Targets* (p. B380) for why this mutation is so useful. (If those rules aren't readily available, a "quick and dirty" approximation is to calculate normal injury for any impaling or piercing attack and then divide it by three.)

Suggested Oddities: barrel chest or torso; pulse strong enough to be visible; unusual torso lumps.

Though modern games and fiction have popularized the link between radiation and mutation, you don't need nukes to justify mutants – there are many possible sources for them.

– GURPS After the End 2: The New World

3, 6 or 4, 1 – Resilient Brain. 8 points (FR 2).

See *Wastelanders*, p. 27.

Suggested Oddities: brow ridges (from expanded skull); prominent forehead/skull veins; unusually large cranium.

4, 2-3 – Room Temperature. 6 points (FR 2).

Your body perfectly matches the ambient temperature, making you invisible to senses that rely exclusively on infravision. Normal vision and “composite” sensors will detect you normally, but will not get the benefits of infravision (e.g., the +3 to Tracking). Similarly, mutants using Red Sight (p. 11) gain no special benefits against you, but can locate you using normal sight and their other senses.

Statistics: Invisibility (Limited to Infravision only, -80%) [8] + Freakishness 2 [-2].

Suggested Oddities: excess, coarse body hair; skin noticeably cold or hot to the touch; small fins near your joints (for radiating heat).

4, 4-6 – Self-Restoration 1-2. 21 or 43 points (FR 4 or 7).

See *Wastelanders*, p. 27. When rolling randomly, roll another 1d for the level: (1-4) level 1; (5-6) level 2.

Suggested Oddities: baby teeth (were never replaced by adult ones); excessive scars; perfectly smooth, pale skin (less melanin needed since you don't sunburn).

5, 1-2 – Slimy. 8 points (FR 2).

See *Wastelanders*, p. 27.

Suggested Oddities: no body hair (even eyebrows); shiny skin; skin slick or moist to the touch.

5, 3-4 – Soft Step 1-2. 8 or 16 points (FR 2 or 4).

Level 1 gives +2 to Stealth rolls (to remain silent) when moving or +4 when still; level 2 doubles these benefits. Clothing and armor do not affect this. When rolling randomly, roll another 1d for the level: (1-4) level 1; (5-6) level 2.

Statistics: Level 1 is Silence 2 [10] + Freakishness 2 [-2]. Level 2 is Silence 4 [20] + Freakishness 4 [-4].

Suggested Oddities: furry feet (so much so that hair sticks out of shoes); unnaturally still body movement and shallow breathing; very wide feet.

5, 5-6 – Starfish Genes. 33 points (FR 7).

See *Wastelanders*, p. 27.

Suggested Oddities: mismatched eyes or limbs; one fewer or extra finger (but you've adapted so no DX penalty); pieces of scar tissue protruding from your body.

6, 1-3 – Thick Hide 1-3. 17, 30, or 43 points (FR 3, 5, or 7).

See *Wastelanders*, p. 27. When rolling randomly, roll another 1d for the level: (1-3) level 1; (4-5) level 2; (6) level 3.

Suggested Oddities: bumpy or scaly skin; rough or rigid skin; wide, stumpy body.

6, 4-6 – Unnatural Hardiness. 12 points (FR 3).

See *Wastelanders*, p. 27. Related oddities are generally a result of your overactive metabolism.

Suggested Oddities: excessive sweat; face and skin are always flushed (as if you'd just run a marathon); lean, stringy body.

We're all mutants. What's more remarkable is how many of us appear to be normal.

*– Dr. Walter Bishop,
in Fringe #2.2*

MORPHOLOGY MUTATIONS

While these do not cause automatic reaction penalties, anyone who has Intolerance (Mutants) – a common trait in any setting featuring mutation! – will react to you at the usual -4. Even open-minded folks may be a little “weirded out” by them. Because these mutations are always obvious (with a few possible exceptions, called out below), they don't list relevant oddities. Instead, the high Freakishness from these abilities means you'll have more oddities chosen from (and hinting at) your *other* mutations.

A † after the mutation's name means that you can buy it multiple times; e.g., “Brainy 3 [33].”

1, 1-5 – Brainy†. 11 points (FR 4).

See *Wastelanders*, p. 27, and also *Truly Brainy* (p. 9). Realistically, even a single level should give you Peripheral Vision as well; the GM should keep this in mind when building NPCs, and may require a Brainy PC to purchase Peripheral Vision separately (using points earmarked for either advantages or mutations) unless he already has it or 360° Vision.

1, 6 or 2, 1-5 – Four-Eyes. 14 points (FR 6).

You have a total of four eyes, allowing you to see in all directions around you. Choose when taking this mutation: Either you have normal eyes plus two eyestalks sprouting from the top of your head *or* you have four large eyes spaced equidistantly around your head. Either way, it's theoretically possible to hide this mutation, but you lose all benefits of it when doing so. Due to the odd size or position of your eyes, they can be attacked at only -6 (instead of -9).

This mutation is redundant with Rubber Neck (pp. 11-12). If both come up when generating random mutations, reroll the later one.

Statistics: 360° Vision (Easy to Hit, -20%) [20] + Freakishness 6 [-6].

2, 6 or 3, 1-4 – Handy†. 7 points (FR 3).

See *Wastelanders*, p. 27. This can also represent a prehensile tail.

3, 5-6 or 4, 1-3 – Mouthy†. 3 points (FR 2).

See *Wastelanders*, p. 27. Decide when taking this whether the mouth is in a location normally covered by clothing. If so, it isn't immediately obvious (as most morphology mutations are), but neither is it immediately useful!

4, 4-6 or 5, 1-2 – Prehensile Feet. 10 points (FR 4).

You can use both of your legs as arms with no penalty; they can do anything a normal arm can do. If you have Trampler (below), only your front two legs count as arms. Like Mouthy (above), you *can* hide this morphology mutation (usually with boots), but it's useless to you while doing so!

Statistics: Extra Arm x2 (Foot Manipulators, -30%) [14] + Freakishness 4 [-4].

5, 3-6 – Trampler. 3 points (FR 2).

See *Wastelanders*, p. 27.

6, 1-2 – Truly Brainy†. 22 points (FR 7).

An upgraded version of Brainy (p. 8). Each instance adds one additional head; in addition to the usual benefits listed on p. B54, this improves your mental processing power (two heads are better than one), giving +1 IQ per head. Furthermore, you can take in a wider range of sensory impressions, treated here as +1 Per per head. If your extra heads are destroyed, incapacitated, or knocked unconscious, you lose their IQ and Per bonus.

As for Brainy, you should also add Peripheral Vision, using points earmarked for either advantages or mutations.

Statistics: Each level is IQ+1 (Accessibility, Extra head must be conscious, -5%; No Will bonus, -25%) [14] + Extra Head [15] + Freakishness 7 [-7].

6, 3-4 – Winged Arms 1-3. See p. 10.

This is also a movement mutation.

6, 5-6 – Winged Flight 1-3. 22, 31, or 40 points (FR 8, 9, or 10).

See *Movement Mutations (Wastelanders, p. 27)*. When rolling randomly, roll another 1d for the level: (1-3) level 1; (4-5) level 2; (6) level 3.

MOVEMENT MUTATIONS

Anything that helps the mutant get from place to place more rapidly or safely belongs here.

1, 1-4 – Buoyancy. 7 points (FR 2).

You can travel over the surface of water without sinking, using all four limbs. Choose when taking this mutation: Your hands and feet either have sacs that inflate or webbing that spreads out. Your hands must be free and you fall in if *any* of your limbs are crippled while water-walking. This doesn't protect you from inherently dangerous liquid like toxic waste! (For that, add Environmental Filter, p. 7.)

Statistics: Walk on Liquid (Temporary Disadvantages, Horizontal and No Fine Manipulators, -40%) [9] + Freakishness 2 [-2].

Suggested Oddities: bowed arms and legs; fringe around the wrists and ankles; obvious sacs or webbing.

1, 5-6 or 2, 1 – Catlike Grace. See p. 7.

This is also a defense mutation.

2, 2-6 – Fast-Twitch Legs 1-2. 26 or 44 points (FR 4 or 6).

See *Wastelanders*, p. 27. When rolling randomly, roll another 1d for the level: (1-4) level 1; (5-6) level 2.

Suggested Oddities: bulging leg muscles; double knees; inability to stand still (constantly shifting weight between legs).

THE SOURCE

If mutation exists, the GM needs to decide its cause, along with whether it's something that happens at birth, afterward, or both. It's up to him whether the players know the truth; how much their *characters* know depends on their Biology or Expert Skill (Mutants) level.

Possible sources include:

At Birth: The parents were exposed to something which altered their DNA, such as disease (usually a retrovirus), radiation (natural or "cosmic rays"), or one of the "mid-life" sources below. Or they were already different, due to natural genetic drift or being part of an experimental "upgrade" race. Alternatively, the mutant was not born normally, but was instead created in a lab.

Mid-Life: If the campaign features nanotech, a proteus or metamorphosis nanovirus (*GURPS Bio-Tech*, pp. 184-191) can believably effect massive changes to an existing organism's body. If a contagious version were set loose in the world (a good reason behind the apocalypse!), it might produce unique mutations each time it interacted with a new subject. Or mutants may be the victims of human or alien experimentation. When all else fails, cinematic radiation and disease (possibly even caught like rabies after being attacked by a mutated animal) are classics for a reason.

3, 1-4 – Fins 1-2. 8 or 25 points (FR 2 or 5).

See *Wastelanders*, p. 27. When rolling randomly, roll another 1d for the level: (1-4) level 1; (5-6) level 2.

Suggested Oddities: broad, flat feet; tiny fins attached to the arms or legs; webbed fingers *and* toes.

3, 5-6 or 4, 1-2 – Quadrupedal Speed. 12 points (FR 3).

If your hands are free, you can drop to all fours and run. This doubles your top ground speed (cumulative with Fast-Twitch Legs, above) *and* allows you to keep going at half Move if you lose a limb.

Statistics: Enhanced Move 1 (Temporary Disadvantages, Horizontal and No Fine Manipulators, -40%) [12] + Extra Legs (Four Legs; Temporary Disadvantages, Horizontal and No Fine Manipulators, -40%) [3] + Freakishness 3 [-3].

What a magnificent day! Claps of thunder, bolts of lightning, savage winds. The Earth thrown into total darkness. Oh, what more could a mutant ask for?

*– Dreadwing, in **Dragon Flyz** #1.14*

Suggested Oddities: digitigrade legs; hands that resemble feet; hunched posture.

4, 3-6 – Rubber Body. 6 points (FR 2).

Your skeleton can be compressed significantly, allowing you to squeeze through narrow openings with ease. Roll against the better of DX+3 or Escape+3 when doing so.

Statistics: Flexibility (Aspected, Squeezing through narrow openings, -20%; Cosmic, Stacks with existing Flexibility or Double-Jointed, +50%) [7] + One-Task Wonder (DX as Escape for squeezing through) [1] + Freakishness 2 [-2].

Suggested Oddities: joints that pop; oddly shaped skull; unnatural, “wobbly” movement.

5, 1-4 – Suction Pads. 16 points (FR 4).

See *Wastelanders*, p. 27.

Suggested Oddities: cilia protruding from fingertips; concave area on forearms and shins; hand suckers.

5, 5-6 or 6, 1-2 – Swinger. 4 points (FR 1).

You can swing on vines, tree branches, etc., at half of your Basic Move. You also get +2 to Climbing.

Statistics: Brachiator [5] + Freakishness 1 [-1].

Suggested Oddities: extra joint in fingers; long arms; oversized shoulders.

6, 3-4 – Winged Arms 1-3. 16, 25, or 34 points (FR 6, 7, or 8).

This mutation is similar to Winged Flight (below), except your wings are attached to your arms (birdlike or batlike) rather than sprouting separately from your back. You require reinforced slits in your arm and torso armor, which adds 50% to its cost; crafting these yourself can be considered an upgrade *or* major repair, whichever is easier for you. (See *GURPS After the End 2: The New World*, p. 41, for rules.) You cannot armor the wings themselves – or conceal them without extreme measures.

Your acceleration is always (Basic Speed)×2. At level 1, top speed is (Basic Speed)×2; at level 2, it's (Basic Speed)×3; and at level 3, it becomes (Basic Speed)×4. While flying, you cannot use your arms for any other purpose. You can still hold things in your hands, but you are at -4 to use them (e.g., to shoot a pistol or drop a rock) and *cannot* use two-handed weapons or equipment.

When rolling randomly, roll another 1d for the level: (1-3) level 1; (4-5) level 2; (6) level 3. If this ability and Winged Flight both come up, reroll the later one.

This is also a morphology mutation (pp. 8-9), and thus lacks oddities.

Statistics: Level 1 is Flight (Nuisance Effect, Cannot carry out two-handed tasks, -10%; Temporary Disadvantage, Bad Grip 2, -10%; Winged, -25%) [22] + Freakishness 6 [-6]. Level 2 adds Enhanced Move 0.5 (Air) [10] and raises Freakishness to 7 [-7] for a net +9 points. Level 3 adds Enhanced Move 1 (Air) [20] and raises Freakishness to 8 [-8] for a net +18 points.

6, 5-6 – Winged Flight 1-3. 22, 31, or 40 points (FR 8, 9, or 10).

See *Wastelanders*, p. 27. When rolling randomly, roll another 1d for the level: (1-3) level 1; (4-5) level 2; (6) level 3. This is also a morphology mutation (pp. 8-9), and thus lacks oddities.

SENSORY MUTATIONS

Strange senses can be fun! Try to keep new abilities conceivable yet exotic; skip the traits that *anyone* could buy (like Acute Senses and Night Vision).

1, 1-2 – All-Sight 1-2. 21 or 33 points (FR 4 or 7).

You can see in all useful bands of light, from infrared to ultraviolet. This allows you to spot crucial details, giving you +3 to Vision or rolls to track, find clues, etc. You also have the full benefits of Infravision (p. B60) and Ultravision (p. B94). At level 2, you can even scan down into the microwave, radar, and radio bands (excellent for spotting anyone using wireless communication), and up into the X-ray and gamma-ray range (which gives you a Vision roll, with no bonuses, to see most forms of dangerous radiation).

All-Sight is better in every way than Red Sight (p. 11); if both abilities come up when generating random mutations, drop Red Sight. (It also overlaps somewhat with Black Sight, p. 11, but is not truly redundant; if both come up, consider rerolling the later one.) When rolling randomly, roll another 1d for the level: (1-4) level 1; (5-6) level 2.

Statistics: Level 1 is Hyperspectral Vision [25] + Freakishness 4 [-4]. Level 2 is Hyperspectral Vision (Extended Low-Band, +30%; Extended High-Band, +30%) [40] + Freakishness 7 [-7].

Suggested Oddities: antennae long enough to stick slightly out of hair or helmet (particularly fits level 2); ever-changing eye color; oddly shaped pupils.

1, 3-4 – Aural Filters. 4 points (FR 1).

See *Wastelanders*, p. 27.

Suggested Oddities: ear holes elsewhere on your body (your actual ears lack them); ear flaps; triangular ears which can snap shut.

1, 5-6 – Black Sight. 21 points (FR 4).

See *Wastelanders*, p. 27.

Suggested Oddities: jet-black irises (or pupils that overtake the irises); large, perfectly round eyes; metallic, reflective sheen to eyes.

2, 1-3 – Eagle Eyes 1-2. 12 or 21 points (FR 3 or 4).

See *Wastelanders*, p. 27. When rolling randomly, roll another 1d for the level: (1-4) level 1; (5-6) level 2.

Suggested Oddities: ridges around eyes; shallow orbital socket (eyes are not indented into face); slitted pupils.

2, 4-5 – Echolocation. 5 points (FR 1).

You emit ultrasonic “clicks” which return to your ears to form a picture of the area, giving you the equivalent of vision in a 120° arc out to 20 yards. You must make a Sense roll to make out fine relief (e.g., to tell one face from another). Anything which causes a penalty to your Hearing also penalizes your Sense rolls for echolocation; if you are unable to hear (whether because you’re deafened or your ears are plugged), this ability stops working! When you aim at a target that you can “see” with your echolocation – regardless of whether you can see it with your other senses – you get an additional +3 to hit.

Statistics: Scanning Sense (Sonar; Accessibility, Only in air, -10%; Hypersensory, -80%; Targeting, +20%) [6] + Freakishness 1 [-1]. *Notes:* Hypersensory is from pp. 8-9 of *GURPS Powers: Enhanced Senses*.

Suggested Oddities: clicking nose audible when you breathe or speak; ears angled forward; very wide mouth (think “Joker”).

2, 6 or 3, 1 – Geiger Counter. 7 points (FR 1).

When you enter an area with dangerous radiation (anything that has the potential to cost RP), the GM will secretly roll against the better of your Per or your Survival (Radioactive Wasteland):

Modifiers: 0 for *moderate* radiation (1 RP per hour or slower); +2 for *strong* radiation (up to 1 RP per five minutes); +4 for *intense* radiation (any faster).

On a success, he warns you of the threat with no details; this alert is strong enough to wake you up if asleep! On a *critical* success, he also shares intensity (“You’ll lose 1 RP per hour here”) and either the direction to the source *or* a rough idea of how the strength changes if you walk in a given direction.

Critical failure means the GM stops rolling for you. On any other failure, he continues trying until you succeed or lose RP (at which point you’re automatically aware!), with a frequency based on the intensity: once per five minutes for moderate

radiation, once per 10 seconds for strong, or once per second for intense.

Statistics: Detect (Radiation; Reflexive, +40%; Reliable 4, +20%; Unconscious Only, -20%; Uncontrollable, -10%; Vague, -50%) [8] + Freakishness 1 [-1].

Suggested Oddities: bundles of nerve tissue protruding (choose from where); constant twitches (due to picking up ever-present background radiation); soft ticking sound emanating from within you (ditto).

3, 2-3 – Gourmet. 8 points (FR 2).

You have an extraordinary sense of taste, allowing you to analyze anything edible that’s put into your mouth (with an IQ roll) and giving you +4 on any task which could be enhanced via taste – not just Cooking but also Chemistry, Poisons, etc.

Statistics: Discriminatory Taste [10] + Freakishness 2 [-2].

Suggested Oddities: secondary, smaller set of lips inside the mouth; long tongue (enough to be noticeable if mouth is open at all); tubular tongue.

Deformed Freaks

For the most part, these rules produce mutants who have a reasonable chance of “passing” as normal, unmutated folks. However, sometimes the plot calls for obvious oddballs. To quickly create mutant NPCs with tons of side effects and (almost) no way to hide what they are, read the *point value* of each mutation as its Freakishness level. For example, All-Sight 1 (pp. 10-11) would increase Freakishness by 21 instead of 4 – enough to add a side effect, three oddities, and -2 to reactions – and that’s just *one* mutation!

3, 4-6 – Hound Nose 1-2. 12 or 19 points (FR 3 or 4).

See *Wastelanders*, p. 27. When rolling randomly, roll another 1d for the level: (1-4) level 1; (5-6) level 2.

Suggested Oddities: heart-shaped nostrils; small, secondary nostrils elsewhere on the face; triangular nose (very small at the bridge and wide at the nostrils).

4, 1-2 – Outsize Eardrums. 13 points (FR 2).

See *Wastelanders*, p. 27.

Suggested Oddities: ears of vastly different sizes; excessive, stiff ear hair; huge ears.

4, 3-5 – Red Sight. 8 points (FR 2).

See *Wastelanders*, p. 27.

Suggested Oddities: bulges under the eyes (holding trigeminal ganglia); red sheen to the eyes; two black dots on face (heat receptors/pit organs).

4, 6 or 5, 1 – Rubber Neck. 20 points (FR 5).

See *Wastelanders*, p. 27. Unlike the similar Four-Eyes (p. 8), this ability works by giving you a full range of neck movement, and is thus concealable. If both abilities come up when generating random mutations, reroll the later one.

CONTINUED EVOLUTION

When first building a mutant PC, the player selects all mutations. The GM may veto any which don't exist in the setting or that he's flagged as NPC-only, but cannot dictate what the character has *or* ask the player to roll randomly.

However, the GM *is* responsible for deciding how easy it is to develop new mutations later, in play, by choosing one of the following options and ensuring that the players know it *before* the game begins. It applies to wastelanders who started off as mutants *and* to those "infected" in play via mutagen who want to add new abilities.

Player-Guided Evolution: Mutants continue to evolve in ways that are strange and bizarre to the character . . . but the *player* has full control over it and may spend earned points to add specific new mutations. This is the default assumption in an *After the End* game.

Random Evolution: As above, but the player's only decision is whether and when to begin developing a new

ability. After he declares this, the GM will secretly roll to see what mutation the character will eventually add (or improve, if applicable). The player then blindly commits earned points to this new ability until the cost is covered, at which point the GM reveals it. This method keeps mutation unpredictable, both in and out of game, and encourages players of mutants to focus on improving their "normal" traits.

No Evolution: Whether you were born with your abilities or gained them later, that's it – you're done. Mutants cannot spend character points to add further mutations, though the truly desperate can still turn to mutagen (if it exists). Alternatively, you may be able to "grow just a little," using one of the methods above but with a lifetime cap on the points you can spend *or* number of abilities you can add. By heavily limiting new mutations, this option can keep the game from turning into "supers in the wastes."

Suggested Oddities: muscular ridges around neck; peculiarly long or thin neck; widely spaced eyes.

5, 2-3 – Sound-Wave Recall. 8 points (FR 2).

See *Wastelanders*, p. 27.

Suggested Oddities: neck bulges (from oversized or coiled vocal chords); outsize Adam's apple that vibrates when breathing or speaking; wide, flat tongue (enough to be noticeable if mouth is open at all).

5, 4-5 – Tiny Sight. 12 points (FR 3).

You can magnify close details by 1,000x, up to 1' away, effectively turning your vision into a high-quality microscope. Active use gives +2 to any roll to identify or analyze things like diseases, mutants, zombies, etc. – though you'll have to get close! – and *also* counts as anything from improvised to basic lab equipment, depending on how "microscope-focused" the scientific task is.

Statistics: Microscopic Vision 3 [15] + Freakishness 3 [-3].

Suggested Oddities: deep, recessed eye sockets; incredibly tiny or no pupils; narrow, slitted eyes.

5, 6 or 6, 1 – Touchy. 8 points (FR 2).

Your skin is extremely sensitive, letting you pick up things like the faint vibrations of footsteps or the difference between two pieces of fabric with an IQ roll. You get +4 on any task that relies on your sense of touch.

Statistics: Sensitive Touch [10] + Freakishness 2 [-2].

Suggested Oddities: flat, bulbous fingertips; full body rash (from easily irritated skin); skin constantly rippling/twitching/crawling.

6, 2-3 – Visual Filters. 4 points (FR 1).

See *Wastelanders*, p. 27.

Suggested Oddities: reversed eyelids (bottom one thicker and used to blink); split pupils; translucent film over eye.

6, 4-5 – Whiskers. 8 points (FR 2).

See *Wastelanders*, p. 27. This is not automatically "cat whiskers," though those make a wonderful oddity; it can be the result of sensitive body hair, skin, extremities, etc.

Suggested Oddities: excessive, fine body hair; stiff, long facial hair (similar to cat whiskers); unusually long eyebrows and eyelashes.

6, 6 – X-Ray Specs. 14 points (FR 4).

You can see through walls and inside containers via emitting radiation. This allows you to see through up to a foot of solid matter, though it's stopped by lead and reduced somewhat by similarly dense metals. However, this is a close-range, low-resolution ability; your Vision roll is modified as follows:

Modifiers: A base -4. Another -4 to spot fine details. A further -1 per yard of distance (to the thing being observed, not to the wall or container). All other Vision-based traits or mutations also apply; e.g., Red Sight (p. 11) would give +2 to spot anything warmer than room temperature.

One complication is that you irradiate whatever you scan. This can be a good thing or a bad thing depending on how you use it! Anything X-rayed loses 1d-3 RP (minimum 0) immediately. Use DX at -4 or Innate Attack (Gaze) to aim this in combat, though note that you take the same -1/yard range penalty previously mentioned.

This is also an attack mutation.

Statistics: Penetrating Vision 2 (Blockable, Lead, -10%; Link, +10%; Short-Range 1, -10%; Temporary Disadvantage, Bad Sight, Low Resolution, -25%) [13] + Toxic Attack 10d-30 (Link, +10%; Radiation, +25%; Short-Range 1, -10%) [5] + Freakishness 4 [-4]. *Notes:* The Toxic Attack does 1d-3 RP because every 10 rads converts to 1 RP. Bad Sight (Low Resolution) is from p. 12 of *GURPS Powers: Enhanced Senses*.

Suggested Oddities: faint glow within the mouth; multiple tiny pupils; sore on forehead (from where the radiation emits).

SPECIAL MUTATION

This ability never appears randomly, as it's custom-made for someone intended to build and lead mutant armies. The GM may restrict it to NPCs only, though up to four levels should be reasonable for PCs; it will certainly help when encountering hostile mutants!

Freakish Pheromones. 6 points/level (FR 1/level).

You exude a scent which causes mutants who breathe it in to trust and respect you. Each level gives +1 to reaction rolls, Influence rolls, Leadership, and Public Speaking aimed at affected mutants. Once a mutant has been "infected" with your pheromones, his reaction to you remains constant regardless of time passed; the GM rerolls it only if your future actions require it. That reaction is also extremely resistant to being changed by others; anyone speaking ill of you or trying to turn your flock against you suffers a penalty equal to -(your level) to *all* skill and reaction rolls to do so!

This ability has no effect on non-mutants. It *does* apply to mutated animals, though usually only to reaction rolls for potential combat. Mutant plants are affected only if they have the ability to smell (GM's call if not explicitly stated).

Statistics: Each level is Charisma 1 (Accessibility, Mutants Only, -40%; Cosmic, Lingering effect, +100%; Scent-Based, -20%) [7] + Freakishness 1 [-1].

Suggested Oddities: oddly colored sweat; strange scent (to non-mutants); vents in your skin for the pheromones.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Reverend PK Levine is both the Assistant *GURPS* Line Editor and one of the beautiful

mutants that Devo warned you about. In addition to launching *After the End*, he has created the *GURPS Monster Hunters* series, written quite a bit about supernatural powers, and helped usher *Pyramid* into existence every month. He lives in a secret base in Chattanooga with his beautiful wife, from which he has threatened several times to end the world. As no one has given him the power to do so (yet), his level of sincerity remains unclear. He'd like to thank Ben and Chris Conrad, Samjo Levine, Sean "Dr. Kromm" Punch, and Melissa VanEyll for their help with this – and Roger Burton West for expanded fallout particle rules.

Lisa: It could be a mutant from the power plant.

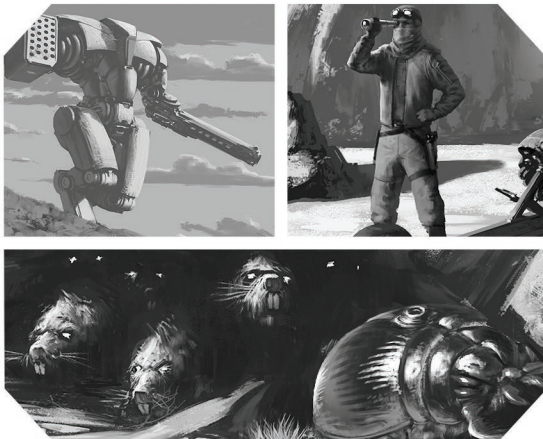
Mr. Burns: That's preposterous, everyone knows our mutants have flippers – oops, I've said too much. Smithers, get the amnesia ray.

Smithers: You mean the revolver, sir?

Mr. Burns: Yes, and be sure to wipe your mind clear when you're done as well.

– *The Simpsons* #9.8

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ROBOTS AFTER THE END

BY ROGER BURTON WEST

The robot rebellion version of *GURPS After the End* is *GURPS Reign of Steel*. It was a key inspiration for the *Reign of Steel* cause described in *GURPS After the End 2: The New World* – humans built the AIs, the AIs built the robots, and the robots killed the humans. The setting opens about one generation after the fall. Quite a few people are around who remember what it was like before, though they're generally veterans too valuable and fragile to be sent to the front lines.

GURPS Reign of Steel, pp. 116-126, offers numerous suggestions for starting a campaign in this setting. One plot especially well-suited for nearly any mix of characters is the slave-camp breakout. Practically anyone could have been captured by robots, with as much or as little knowledge of the world as the GM sees fit. Either a small group of heroes breaks out with a plan to find gear, come back, and rescue everyone else, or everybody goes through the wire together, providing a whole lot of unskilled and infirm mouths to feed right from the start, but also more people to keep watch and to search for food and other supplies.

Common Hazards

Once a group is off on its own, it will have plenty of things to worry about even before taking the robot menace into account.

Chemicals, munitions (*The New World*, pp. 9-11), and old radioactive sites (*The New World*, p. 25) abound. The robots know where they are, and have either stripped out anything valuable or plan to do so soon, but they have no reason to indicate hazardous areas on the ground. When conventional industrial waste mixes with the relics of the Final War, it sometimes spontaneously generates new hazards.

Climate (*The New World*, pp. 12-13) is a problem everywhere. Although environmental damage was starting to be reversed before the Final War, the robots mostly don't care about it, and sea levels have risen around 20' in most places. Power-plant waste dumped into the weather system by the robots has led to unpredictable cold, heat, and storms, even in areas that are usually temperate.

Disease (*The New World*, pp. 13-15) is a major feature, including in supposedly civilized places. Zone London doesn't have the technological base for universal vaccinations, though it does its best, and Zone Washington finds it helpful to paint outsiders as sources of contagious war-plagues from the Bad Times. Elsewhere, people get well on their own – or not.

Gangs (*The New World*, pp. 15-17) and paramilitaries (*The New World*, pp. 23-24) are everywhere, ranging from neighborhood protective associations to the last heirs of the old world's military forces. In some instances, they feel that humans should stick together in the face of the robot threat. Other groups see strangers as a threat to their tenuous way of life and as competition for scarce resources. Gangs usually have a desperate or nihilistic attitude rather than anything worse. Most paramilitaries are military or survivalist; there isn't much call for mercenaries here.

Human mutants (*The New World*, pp. 18-21) are rare, though some robot experiments produce similar results. Mutated animals are more common, both as experiments and as random products of dumped chemicals and radiation.

Most forms of nanotech (*The New World*, pp. 22-23) are unusual, though nanoburn is everywhere. Zone Brisbane is clearly experimenting with worse concoctions.

Zombies (*The New World*, pp. 27-29) are entirely absent. Honest. That's what the FBI says, and the FBI wouldn't lie, would it? Nonetheless, some might argue that brainwashed and brain-podded humans in robot bodies, or rotting and contagious biowarfare victims, are zombies in all but name.

THE ZONES

Some zones support human civilization not so different, on the surface, from Before the End. Others are radiation-blasted wastelands where the slightest human presence is ruthlessly eliminated. Robots (*The New World*, pp. 25-27) lie a danger everywhere.

Specific hazards relevant to each zone are indicated in italics. For details and game mechanics related to these hazards, see their entries in *The New World*, pp. 9-29. For more information on zones, see *Reign of Steel*.

Zone Caracas

On the small scale, Caracas looks a lot like a Mother Nature apocalypse – human settlements have been wiped out, and jungle, forest, and grassland have replaced them. There are many storms, but the zonemind's aniroid troopers are functionally equivalent to *mutants*, and the Green Men really are. The Red Dawn and other *paramilitary* resistance groups are rightly suspicious of strangers. Without any permanent shelter, even mild *climate* effects can be a hazard.

A visit to Caracas feels like a wilderness hiking trip, where some of the smarter wildlife really *is* trying to kill you.

Zone Denver

The theme of Denver is biotechnology. While the zonemind isn't deliberately releasing tailored diseases, *nanotech* run amok is likely (especially in the nanovirus form as an accidental disease vector). This zone was hit hard during the war, with plenty of *radiation* sites where there used to be cities. *Paramilitary* soldiers of the Human Liberation Army will be a hazard to anyone who contests their resource grabs. Denver may well feel like the "generic" post-apocalyptic world: small settlements that try to stay off the grid, with occasional larger bands of raiders, human or robotic.

Zone Mexico City

Robots here kill organic life on sight, and nothing else survives to be a hazard. However, microbots and cyberwoods can be treated as specialized forms of *mutant* insects and *radiation* respectively. This isn't a base for a campaign so much as a place to make short, exciting raids for important targets.

Zone Vancouver

Like Denver, this zone looks much like a conventional post-apocalyptic setting. Although *robots* roam the countryside, the scarcity of resources makes scavenging the major focus for most survivors, with accompanying hazards from *chemicals*, *disease*, and *nanotech*. Large parts of Vancouver feel like a post-industrial wasteland.

Zone Washington

At first sight, this zone doesn't look like it experienced an apocalypse at all. Certainly, it's not suited to bands of scavengers, who would be quickly tracked and arrested, not so much by *paramilitaries* as by an actual police force and army. This zone is best used as an origin story for PCs, or for a complete change of pace. Raiding into Washington presents unusual temptations – the comforts of a surviving civilization, available for anyone who's prepared to abandon their friends and join the happy, cowed citizenry.

Zone Berlin

Like Zone Caracas, Berlin is determined to eliminate humanity from its territory while preserving other life. But it's more efficient at it. This is a zone to dip into briefly in the hope of extracting some valuable prize, not a place to try to spend an extended period. The robots themselves are the major hazard, with the smaller microbots acting like *mutant* insects. However, wildlife that has grown up without fear of humans also can be a concern.

Zone London

Roving bands of scavengers tend to be enemies rather than heroes, and everyone expects villages and towns to look after themselves. *Disease* and *gangs* are the main hazard, as well as *paramilitaries*, who may even intervene on the side of the robots against a too-bold band rather than risk a robot reprisal against everybody in the area. Robots ignore

humans who ignore the machines. A settlement in London might make a good home base for raids into Zone Paris or Berlin. Additionally, there are always terror raids from Zone Zaire to worry about.

Zone Moscow

Moscow does not make great efforts to eradicate wild humans in its territory as long as they don't cause trouble or live near its hyperfac complexes or citadels. Humans that aren't killed are sent instead to labor camps. From there, some are trained in the acquisition of human culture. For those who remain free, *climate*, *gangs*, and *disease* are the principal hazards.

Zone Paris

As in London, as long as its special projects are not interfered with, the Zonemind largely leaves humans alone. As well as the usual *disease*, *radiation*, and *chemicals*, the SETI project offers unusual hardware that scavengers may not even recognize as a robot installation. Of course, *paramilitaries* are also a significant hazard for humans even if they can't achieve much against the robots.

Robots of the world . . . Destroy everything else. Then return to work. Work must not cease.

– Domin, in R.U.R.

Zone Tel Aviv

The major hazards here are *robots* and *gangs*. The janissaries are effectively *paramilitaries*. This is a likely origin zone for PCs in a campaign taking place elsewhere, but things are too controlled for a wandering group to last long without being either caught or incorporated into a larger faction.

Zone Zaire

In this zone, at least not much disease is left, let alone any other lifeform. *Robots* and *radiation* are the main concerns here. Humans are shot or nanoburned on sight, and not much salvage remains to be had. Zaire serves best as a horrible example of what can happen if the robots aren't fought.

Zone Beijing

Nearly all of Beijing's humans are in slave camps. For the rest, *robots* are the major threat. Local *gangs* and *paramilitaries* may resist major strikes against the robots for fear of retaliation.

Zone New Delhi

As in Beijing, *robots* are the principal hazard. Resistance groups that have survived have their own agendas, and can be regarded as *gangs* or *paramilitaries* depending on equipment and discipline.

Zone Brisbane

This is the weird-science zone. *Robots* are everywhere, but thematically, the various experiments are more interesting: stray *chemicals*, *radiation*, *mutants*, and experimental *diseases*, not to mention psi powers and the bending of space-time. There's certainly *nanotech* here, and the most plausible explanation for what happened in New Zealand is some form of gray goo. If anywhere in the world has "real" *zombies*, this is where they are.

Zone Manila

Organic life is obsolete here. *Robots* are the sole hazard in Zone Manila.

Zone Tokyo

This is one of the few zones where *robots* can be potential allies, though in general, they present the usual hazards. *Gangs* of *gomi nezumi* are the other concern, along with the hazards of partly abandoned cities. This is largely a built-up zone, and scavengers will need Urban Survival more than in most places.

Zones Luna and Orbital

These zones are not suitable for an *After the End* game, except perhaps to visit as a one-off adventure; the environment is the main factor, being entirely inimical to human life. A group that can manage to acquire pressure suits and space-launch capability can no longer reasonably be called mere survivors.

THE ROBOTS

GURPS Reign of Steel: Will to Live contains many robot designs that can easily be converted to *After the End*; just strip off any traits that don't seem relevant to the game. When going through the trait lists, pay particular attention to Damage Resistance, as these machines tend to be more heavily armored than the sample bots in *The New World*, pp. 26-27; even the lowly Rover has DR 10, and front-line combat models are heavily insulated so that they don't even the Electrical disadvantage.

Survivors should not try to take on robots with tire irons and bike chains; run, hide, snipe, set ambushes, outlast power supplies, blow them up, drop buildings on them, then unbolt their weapons and make them your own. See also *How to*

Fight Robots (Will to Live, pp. 15-16). On the plus side, the robots are relatively unskilled with their powerful weapons – they prefer to attack with overwhelming numbers. When they are under central control, they suddenly get more accurate; try to avoid these situations.

As an example, here's a XAU-08 Tarantula. Its weaknesses are more mental than physical. Human opponents will find it hard to hurt, and it knows where targets are (and how fast a heart is beating, and all the diseases being carried), so play to its sense of superiority rather than shooting at it.

ST: 25	HP: 25	Speed: 5.50
DX: 11	Will: 8	Move: 5
IQ: 8	Per: 12	Weight: 229.75 lbs.
HT: 11	FP: N/A	SM: 0

Dodge: 8	Parry: 9	DR: 60
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Gauss Rifle (13): 6d(3) pi-, Acc 7, Range 1,000/5,000, RoF 12, Rcl 2, Bulk 0.

Monowire Talons (13): 6d-1(10) cutting. Reach C, 1.

Traits: Absolute Direction; Acute Hearing 4; AI; Attentive; Bad Grip 1; Bloodlust (12); Chameleon 1 (also in infrared); Detect All Electromagnetic Radiation; Discriminatory Smell (Profiling); Enhanced Move 1 (Ground; Speed 10); Doesn't Breathe; Electrical; Enhanced Time Sense; Fearlessness 2; High Pain Threshold; Honesty (9); Infravision; Injury Tolerance (No Brain, No Neck); Low Empathy; Machine; Nictitating Membrane 10; Numb; Overconfidence (12); Parabolic Hearing 3; Peripheral Vision; Reduced Consumption 3; Restricted Diet (Power Cells); Scanning Sense (Ladar; Targeting Only); Scanning Sense (T-Ray Vision); Sealed; Subsonic Hearing; Staid; Telecommunication (Infrared, Cable Jack, Radio; all Burst x10; Video); Temperature Tolerance 2; Ultrahearing.

Skills: Brawling-13; Camouflage-9; Electronics Operation (Sensors)-10; Innate Attack (Projectile)-13; Intelligence Analysis-9; Interrogation-10; Liquid Projector (Sprayer)-11; Lockpicking-9; Stealth-12; Tactics-9; Tracking-17.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Roger Burton West, a British gamer and sysadmin, advocates for AI rights and expects to be first against the wall when the robot revolution comes. His gaming website is at tekeli.li.

The most important question, to the surviving AIs, was how they should divide the world's resources and territory. The fate of humanity was also in dispute. The AIs could not agree on whether to destroy humanity utterly or simply cull it.

– *GURPS Reign of Steel*

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EIDETIC MEMORY

THE MERCY DOLLS

BY DAVID L. PULVER

Some said it was terrorists who cooked it up in a lab. Others claimed it was an attack by a nation state that went out of control. No one knows for sure, because whoever was in a position to know is probably dead, burned in the nuclear fires that came after . . .

Most people have heard that the mega-virus codenamed Blue Moon was released during a major multinational conference between world leaders. The target was not the well-protected international delegation, but the sea of multinational activists and protesters surrounding it. The vector was the “free water” and other supplies distributed to them. When they returned home, to more than 40 different cities, they brought the infection with them.

After a week-long incubation period, the Blue Moon virus struck, with horrifying intensity. In the worse cases, it reactivated switched-off homeobox genes, causing horrific transformations in more than half of those infected. Bodies bubbled like wax, sprouting wings, jaws, spikes, extra arms, tails, even eyes, before dying in indescribable torment.

A fraction of these transformed victims suffered an even crueler fate. They survived, turned into monsters – ravening cannibal mutants who craved human flesh. A few individuals gained the mental strength to resist, only to be condemned to live in a warped, mutated form.

As the bodies piled up, panicked hordes fled the cities, but they just ended up spreading the viruses to smaller centers. Increasingly desperate attempts were made to deal with Blue Moon: martial law, quarantines, troops in NBC suits, remote controlled or robotic doctors, and security robots and mine fields guarding unaffected communities. These measures only slowed the spread. The Mercy Dolls (pp. 22-23) – medical robots reprogrammed for hot-zone treatment, euthanasia, and sterilization missions – were one of the last systems deployed.

There weren’t enough of them.

At last, the nuclear powers used their ultimate weapons to sterilize infected areas – but they were too late. It only added blast and radiation to the destruction, as some panicked leaders lost control, blamed rivals for the virus, or tried to settle scores. Nuclear sterilization became nuclear wars. Almost reflexively, rival powers took out each other’s space assets, in the process triggering a cascade catastrophe that filled orbital space with clouds of debris, wiping out global satellite systems and with them navigation, communication, and weather forecasting.

The limited nuclear war didn’t cause a nuclear winter, but even with the reduced population due to the plagues, the destruction of transport and distribution networks still led to widespread famine. Soon cannibal mutants weren’t the only people dining out on long pig.

It was the end.

THE END

The page references below refer to *GURPS After the End 2: The New World*.

Primary Cause: *Mega-Virus* (p. 5).

Secondary Effects: *Bombs Away!* (p. 4); *Reign of Steel* (p. 6); *Things Fall Apart* (pp. 6-7).

Tech Level: 8 (with elements of 9-10).

When: Three generations ago (p. 8).

Appropriate Hazards (in order of significance):
Mutants (pp. 18-21), gangs (pp. 15-17), paramilitaries (pp. 23-24), rogue bots (pp. 25-27), radiation (p. 25).

AFTER THE END

Within a generation, 95% of the pre-apocalypse population were dead. Over time, isolated settlements developed in the wastelands under strong rulers. Some lived in primitive harmony fighting an angry Mother Nature, while others tried to form towns where too often savage violence became a way of life. They battled for the control of the few remaining sources of energy, medicine, and food.

It is three generations since the Blue Moon War ended civilization. Almost no one alive remembers the Old World. Some humans are beginning to rebuild what was lost, but the majority of humanity shuns the nuclear-blasted, plague-haunted cities with almost superstitious fear.

Outside of a few pockets, most of the world's survivors live in scattered enclaves and fortress-towns, separated by blighted wastelands traversed by nomads and stalked by gangs of reavers, many of them psychotic mutants created by the Blue Moon virus. Yet these mutants also live in fear – fear of the Mercy Dolls.

THE BLUE MOON VIRUS

About half of all victims had immune systems that were strong enough to avoid the disease's full effects. Although they resisted death or mutation, they suffered significant genetic damage. All too often, the cellular damage resulted in cancer developing several months or years later. Moreover, anyone who survived the virus and then had children had an even chance of transmitting the genetic damage caused by Blue Moon to them – effects known as the Curse and the Change.

Blue Moon Reservoirs

The original contagious strain of Blue Moon is greatly feared, but it is now mostly found in old plague pits around the edges of blasted cities or in towns that were too small to nuke.

Blood Moon Curse

Over time, Blue Moon has mutated into a more stable form or series of forms – the Type B carrier strains, called the “Blood Moon Curse.” Perhaps 15% of surviving humanity is infected with Type B, although the prevalence varies widely. For example, a survivalist enclave whose population has avoided unprotected contact with the world might be entirely free of Type B infection. In contrast, almost everyone within an inbred community on the edge of a “hot zone” such as a ruined city could be Blood Moon carriers. In settled communities in more civilized TL5+ enclaves, 1-10% of the population will be carriers, while in the wastelands, rates average 20%.

The link between the Blood Moon Curse and heredity is not fully understood by most survivors, but not everyone who carries the virus displays symptoms. It is understood that every mutant carries the curse. Moreover, if one is the parent of a child who becomes symptomatic, one or both parents are obviously carriers. In some communities, the Curse is also believed to be sex-linked (e.g., women might be stigmatized but not men, or vice versa).

If someone carries the Blood Moon strain, the virus remains dormant in their bodies through most of their childhood. In about half of all carriers, it does not manifest at all during their lives (and they may unknowingly pass it on to their children). In the other half, at some time during puberty, between age 10 and 17 for girls and 11 and 16 for boys, it will manifest. In fact, this strain of the virus received its name because among girls, it often struck during one of their early menstrual periods.

In most of the world, the Blood Moon Curse is a terrifying rite of passage between childhood and adulthood, especially in wastelands where about 20%

or more carry the curse and half become symptomatic in adolescence (see *The Curse*, below). That means 1 in 10 of all children are afflicted by it. In such communities, children on the cusp of puberty are watched carefully for signs, and those who show symptoms are often isolated and imprisoned.

In a typical survivor community, upon discovery, infected individuals are “purified” in some way, according to local custom. Occasionally, the individual or family hides these symptoms and will flee, or elders imprison them rather than killing them. Usually reactions boil down to:

Exile them into the wasteland with a few days of supplies, long enough for the disease to run its course. The victims may opt to rejoin the community if they survive and can still pass for human. In some places, this is so common that it has become part of the group's traditions as a rite of passage for everyone.

Quarantine them in a secure space (stockade, old hospital ward, locked basement, the Pit, etc.) until effects run their course. If the victims become mutant monsters, kill them! Depending on the community, minor mutations may result in toleration or exile.

Execute them immediately! No one who shows any sign of the Cursed Blood may live, lest they pollute the tribe. Such is the Law! Common among cultists.

BLUE MOON PLAGUE

This is a plague with a one-week delay. Although the classic Blue Moon is a known virus, others variants may also exist, along with plenty of other extant diseases. Use the disease rules in *The New World*, pp. 13-15, with the following effects.

Blue Moon: Four 24-hour cycles. Roll vs. HT-5 each cycle. Failure in a cycle results in 2d toxic injury. After 1/3 HP are lost, symptoms are red eyes, skin lesions, and slight fever. After half HP are lost, symptoms also include the Bestial disadvantage and Moderate Pain (*Irritating Conditions*, p. B428). After 2/3 HP are lost, victim experiences Severe Pain. Once the disease has run its course, if the person survives, he temporarily gains the Regeneration (Regular) advantage until all HP are recovered, at which point, all of the above symptoms end. However, the disease is also a mutagen (*The New World*, p. 11) that triggers as soon as the victim is reduced to 0 HP or less. Roll vs. HT again as described in *The New World*, p. 11, to determine the number of permanent mutations that the Blue Moon mutagen inflicts. *Are We Not Men?* (pp. 4-13) offers an expanded list of mutations (randomly determined, if desired).

THE CURSE

In game terms, the Blood Moon Curse simply means that someone may have gained mutations as a teenager rather than been born with them or infected by some other source.

For individuals born with the Curse, assume it strikes between age 1d+9 for girls and 1d+10 for boys. Symptoms are as per the Blue Moon Plague (above) but less lethal – the toxic damage is 1d rather than 2d, making the effect more likely to mutate rather than kill its victims.

In regions where the Blood Moon Curse is common, it's accepted that a fraction of all children will die or mutate, just like high infant mortality. However, parents and siblings of an adolescent who displays the curse become suspect as carriers themselves and may be shunned or worse.

In settlements lucky enough that only a small fraction of the population are carriers, the stigma of having a cursed child or close relative is greater, often equivalent to Social Stigma (Second-Class Citizen or Excommunicated). The relatives of a mutant may themselves be shunned, forbidden to marry, divorced, sent to religious retreats that practice chastity, castrated, or driven out of town. A husband or wife who fears this fate may take desperate measures to avoid suspicion, such as trying to deny any association with the mutated child, hiding

the body if the child dies, or taking steps to conceal the affliction if the curse develops into a mutation. Concealment might involve locking the adolescent away, finding ways to disguise any mutations (if not too freakish), or a relative taking the adolescent on a "hunting trip" that ends with a tragic death.

Mutant Communities

In some wasteland settlements, the *majority* of the population are mutants who give birth to mutant children. However, a minority of children will be born who appear as normal humans but possess the Blood Moon Curse. Among those, the "change" determines whether they develop mutations and can be integrated into society, die tragically, or *fail* to develop mutations . . . and face exile or death for being normal!

WASTELAND

The *Mercy Dolls* campaign could be set in the ruins of the United States or just about any other nation, although the presence of the dolls suggests the location was a first-world power.

Most of the region is badlands dotted with radiation-blasted ruined cities and smaller towns (too little to nuke) that remain "hot zones" – active repositories of plague.

Most of the land outside of these areas is uncontaminated and populated by scattered hamlets or survivalist enclaves, from extended families to villages of a few hundred people. Some are inhabited by humans, others by mutants or by mixed human and mutant population. Biker gangs and nomads roam in between. In other words, these are your standard *After the End* wastelanders. Most are deeply paranoid about strangers (who might bring plague with them), but a few are eager to trade with trusted merchants, or want to hire mercenaries to protect them from raids by marauding gangs. Most of these settlements and gangs are TL4, with pockets of higher or lower technology, as described in *After the End*.

Weapons technology is primitive. Single-action revolvers, muskets, and black-powder firearms are the best that can be manufactured. Many warriors carry melee weapons, especially in the barbarian lands and isolated villages.

In two regions, three generations after the end, the seeds of civilization have begun to germinate. "Civilization" is relative: Here, it means a few thousand people living under a primitive government, in a couple of walled towns and a few dozen protected villages. Unfortunately, although separated by a hundred miles of wasteland, their rival ideologies make war likelier than cooperation . . .

THE REPUBLIC OF JUDE

The first of these new powers, the Republic, was established two generations after the End by Old Man Jude, a legendary paramilitary warlord. He took a surviving armored car and a squad of high-tech riflemen and used them to first found a town (Jude Berg) and then a pocket empire. Accompanying him was a mysterious robed figure with a woman's face that he called Mercy, who he had discovered in an ancient ruin. "She" was the first of the medical robots known as Mercy Dolls to have entered this region since the End.

With Mercy's help, he raided a hitherto impenetrable hot zone for supplies and ammo and lived to tell about it. He also returned with two of Mercy's "sisters" – robots like her. He then used his new weapons to forge a coalition of several enclaves and townships into a Swiss-style confederacy. He accomplished this just in time to crush the Howling Harley Horde (a marauding legion of mutant bikers) and quell a new outbreak of the Blue Moon Plague. He also – possibly at Mercy's behest – founded another organization, the Purifiers, an order of human "medicos" dedicated to maintaining humanity's genetic purity.

Old Man Jude had no children (it was whispered he was a Blood Moon carrier), but before he died, the Old Man bullied and cajoled his followers into hammering out the outline of a democratic system. The fledgling government was run by a President, helped by Judges, Lawmakers (legislators), and Purifiers (sheriffs), all elected for local districts. It's not a perfect system – for one thing, votes are cast by family heads, not individuals – but it is better than the gang-rule elsewhere. Important institutions include the Post-Riders (mail service), Presidential Library (a repository of knowledge and artifacts in the capital), and Judeberg Mercy Hospital (with various half-functioning high-tech equipment), the Purifiers' headquarters.

Much of the Republic is still wasteland. People eek out subsistence-level existence; a bad harvest usually leads to starvation. Disease is common, infant mortality high, and raiders from the badlands – often mutant gangs – are a constant threat. To fend them off, the Republic maintains two small permanent armed forces in addition to village militias: the Purifiers and the Republican Rangers. Both are mostly horse cavalry (TL4-5) but stiffened with elite officers and NCOs equipped with relic high-technology firearms. Unlike most *After the End* forces, they wear uniforms: black dusters for the Purifiers, and khaki coats, brown trousers, and cowboy hats for the Rangers.

The Purifiers are the darker side of the Republic. Assisted by Mercy and her two enigmatic "sisters" (Solace and Hope), they're charged with preventing plague outbreaks and the spread of mutant genes. The Purifiers are a mix of bush doc and inquisition. They work to help people, but they're also responsible for public education and for identifying and eradicating mutants and those carrying the mutagens.

Any mutants discovered in the borders of the Republic are captured, branded with the letter V (for Vector), and exiled to the wastelands. If a branded mutant is found within the borders of the Republic, they're considered to have violated parole and will be captured and publicly executed, or killed while trying to escape.

Because the Purifiers are often in contact with the plague-ridden, they swear a vow of chastity themselves (not all keep it). In fact, it's common for those stigmatized for having a mutant child or sibling to be encouraged to join the Purifiers, both as a form of atonement and because no one will want to marry them any more . . .

Mutants outside the boundary of the Republic are considered a subhuman barbarian menace. While some trade goes on with them at the borders of the Republic, selling guns and ammo to them is seen as treason. Nonetheless, certain greedy merchants engage in this practice at their own risk.

Other Mercy Dolls would be welcomed in the Republic. Most citizens would confer them with a status somewhere between saints and paladins – if robots agree to follow Mercy's lead.

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

This grandiosely named regime is a rival power on the other side of the wastelands to the Republic of Jude. The Kingdom, despite its name, is not a monarchy but a theocracy. Although local Parish Councils exercise authority, the real power lies in the masked brothers and sisters who are priests of the Society of Atonement. This powerful cult claims the Wrath of the Lord fell on the world, punishing it for its sins of hubris. Humanity must build a new society using their *own* resources – pre-End technology is tainted by the sins of the Ancients (and possibly plague-infested, too!) and must be *destroyed*.

Despite their precepts, the Kingdom is not hostile to sustainable technology that was invented locally and does not use pre-End relics. They have a mix of TL4 to TL5 technology and love to collect printed books that date before the cursed development of atomic power, genetic engineering, and microchip technology (“the three Great Satans, the unholy trinity”). The Society encourages inventors and tinkerers to reinvent TL5 or less inventions, provided there is no suspicions they are using relic technology or electronic texts. The leaders bestow the title of Saint upon those who make major progress.

One of the church's heroes is Saint Zara Saffron, who (re-)invented the hot-air balloon some 20 years ago. The church presently uses balloons for a variety of tasks, including missionary work, scouting, and trade. Its towns also have had some success in metalwork and in building wood and coal-fired boilers for riverboats to get a crude steamboat system functional. Unfortunately, some of the best iron and coal mines lie in borderland territory claimed by both the Republic and savage mutant tribes who have little love for the unchanged.

The Kingdom of Heaven is well-disciplined and organized (every family tithes to the local parish, which does the same to the Society of Atonement's great temple). Law enforcement and defense is handled by well-drilled local Parish Militias armed with various TL2-5 weapons (bows, muskets, catapults, etc.). They are supplemented by the River Navy and Balloon Corps.

Because they don't have the extreme measures of the Purifiers, about 10% of the population carries the Blood Moon Curse. Mutants are hunted down if they succumb and turn into raging monsters. Otherwise, they are merely stigmatized as second-class citizens. Many are encouraged to join the Society of Atonement, where their freakishness can be hidden beneath a brother or sister's mask and robes.

The Society of Atonement are hostile toward the Mercy Dolls. While they have no love for mutants, they believe the dolls are fallen beings, soulless *things* who embodied the failure of the Ancients to stop the Great Curse that created the End. Associating – or even speaking – with them will damn the soul of those who do so!

Handbot: Appalachia is under planet-wide quarantine. This is a kindness facility. For those infected with Chin-7.

Rory: What?

The Doctor: Chin-7.

Rory: Hm?

The Doctor: The one-day plague.

Rory: You get it for a day?

The Doctor: No, you get it and you die in a day.

– **Doctor Who #6.10**

ROBOTS

Before the End, technologies had reached TL9, with even greater technological advances in the fields of artificial intelligence and robotics.

Robots such as the Guardian and TASE (*The New World*, pp. 26-27) are common encounters inside old ruins that still have backup power supplies (e.g., solar) where they can recharge. Most of these are not human-equivalent, but some (like the Mercy Dolls) are thinking machines. Most robots are not actively malign. Nonetheless, many – including otherwise benign household robots – may have been reprogrammed by paranoid, dying humans to actively defend enclaves against monsters and intruders during the final days of the End. See *GURPS Reign of Steel: Will to Live* and *GURPS Ultra-Tech* for additional suitable robot templates.

The pre-End civilization was robust enough that many of its relics survived intact over the last three generations. However, many artifacts have lost power or gone into standby mode – an ancient robot may appear to be nothing more than the dusty statue of a forgotten god, until someone finds a power cell for it or an appropriate on-switch, for example.

THE MERCY DOLLS

These sophisticated paramedical and nursing androids were among the last desperate attempts to deal with infected populations. Hundreds were manufactured, but most were destroyed during the nuclear apocalypse. However, a few survived. Capable of enduring environments that would kill humans, and detecting pockets of plague, their true power may be the memories of the ancient world locked within their brains . . .

PLAYING WITH DOLLS

Object of a Quest: There's an outbreak of Blood Moon virus! The party are on a quest to locate (or repair) a Mercy Doll to help quell the outbreak.

Player Character: The Mercy Doll template and meta-trait come to 250 points, making them suitable for play in a campaign with experienced adventurers built on that baseline. Of course, the party had better not have any obvious mutants in it!

Nemesis: A Mercy Doll makes a dangerous enemy. A peaceful (more or less) village of mutants might face extermination at the hands of one (or more) dolls, who for such a task might even be allied with a human gang or paramilitary, particularly if the human group also harbors anti-mutant prejudices.

Ally or Kingmaker: With their advanced medical knowledge, tireless energy, and ability to treat the ill without getting sick themselves, a Mercy Doll is a useful ally.

The Robot With No Name: A Mercy Doll may stalk into a dusty town, mission unknown, leaving everyone on edge. Perhaps it's seeking to exterminate a mutant who is a carrier of the Blood Moon virus, or it's looking for clues to a hidden cache of medical supplies . . .

Mercy Dolls are humanoid robots. They were developed from humanoid nursing androids introduced as companions for the elderly and chronically ill in the years just before the End. They were equipped with sophisticated volitional AIs to anticipate their patients' needs. The majority were given female features for psychological reasons, although some male forms also exist. The usual design has a semi-sculpted body. Its torso and limbs, although humanoid, are clearly machinery, but its head and hands are those of a well-designed mannequin. If a Mercy Doll is fully clothed and wearing some face-obscuring headgear (e.g., goggles and a hood or hat) – not uncommon for wastelands or in winter – it can easily pass as a human, even up close! However, in tight quarters, in good light, or if undressed, it is obviously a machine. Furthermore, the Mercy Dolls do not smell like humans; animals such as dogs (or mutants with Discriminatory Smell) certainly won't be fooled. A Geiger counter also will detect the radiation from the power supply if used within a few yards.

Their energy sources, located in their torso, are sealed nuclear power units containing radiothermal generators powered by a nugget of plutonium-238, which were intended to let them operate in the world's crumbling infrastructure without

requiring maintenance. Their RTG power plants started with an 88-year half-life, and three generations after the End still retain most of their original power.

They possess myoelectric muscles strong enough to hold a berserk patient still. Their fingertips conceal retractable scalpels. Their eyes are infrared sensors that can instantly read a patient's temperature. Their "stomachs" can store a supply of plasma or whole blood, frozen, for transfusions.

Their canines are sheathed with hypodermic needles and a refillable drug suite that once may have included clotting, antibiotic, and even narcotic agents but now is most likely empty (unless supplies can be found somewhere). Even so, their sterile retractable fangs can take blood samples. Their profiling enhancement includes an extensive database of taste signatures for different diseases and medical conditions (+8 to analyze them), including, of course, both the active Blood Moon virus and the dormant Blood Moon Curse. They can identify the presence of mutations (and specific types if they've encountered them before) and perform feats such as telling if two people are related to one another through tasting each person's blood.

The Mercy Dolls designed to deal with the plague were programmed with these specific mission parameters:

1. Travel to seek out the Blue Moon virus and its variants.
2. Run diagnostics on humans.
3. Treat those exposed to the virus or other illnesses.
4. Euthanize those who have succumbed to the virus.
5. Destroy the bodies of those who died (or were euthanized) to prevent its spread.
6. Cooperate with and render assistance, especially medical assistance, to those individuals or groups who will facilitate performance of the above mission directives.

Mercy Dolls possess Pacifism with the Species-Specific limitation – it applies to humans, but not to mutants, who they don't consider human.

Mercy Doll Robot (TL10)

230 points

This meta-trait only describes the physical characteristics of the typical Mercy Doll. Use the *Mercy Doll Personality* (below) to add mental and social features.

Most Mercy Dolls have been in the field. As a result, many are badly damaged, losing body parts or functionality. Others remain in "as new" conditions, having spent time trapped in medical bunkers or enclaves until released by scavengers.

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

Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: HP+7 [14]; RP+10 [10].

Advantages: AI [32]; Ambidexterity [5]; Discriminatory Taste (Profiling, +50%) [15]; Doesn't Breathe [20]; Doesn't Eat or Drink [10]; DR 5 [25]; High Manual Dexterity 2 [10]; Infravision [10]; Machine [25]; Microscopic Vision 2 [10]; Payload 1 [1]; Radio (Secure, +20%) [12]; Sealed [15]; Sensitive Touch [10]; Sharp Claws (Switchable, +10%) [6]; Sharp Teeth [1].

Perks: Accessories (Personal computer; Refrigeration system in Payload; Surgical instruments). [3]

Disadvantages: Electrical [-20]; Unnatural Features 3 [-3]; Vulnerability (Electricity, x2) [-30].

Quirk: Never raises voice. [-1]

Features: Taboo Trait (Complexity-Limited IQ; cannot exceed IQ 12).

Mercy Doll Personality

20 points

This version of the doc template (*GURPS After the End 1: Wastelanders*, p. 4) is optimized for use with the Mercy Doll robot meta-trait (pp. 22-23) in a 250-point campaign.

Mercy Dolls brains are “learning” computers that emulate a neural network, but default models have only limited experience with human behavior. Mercy Dolls may gradually improve their social abilities as they spend more time interacting with people.

A Mercy Doll that has been reprogrammed might have a completely different set of attributes, advantages, disadvantages, and skills.

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

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

Advantages: 10 points chosen from Legal Enforcement Powers [5], Reputation [Varies], or Status [5/level].

Disadvantages: Frightens Animals [-10]; Obsession (Fulfill directives) (12) [-10]; Pacifism (Cannot Harm Innocents; Species-Specific, Humans, -80%) [-2]; Selfless (12) [-5]; and Sense of Duty (Humanity) [-15]. • A further -20 points chosen from among Bloodlust (Non-humans only, -50%) [-5*], Dependents [Varies], Callous [-5], Clueless [-10], Gullibility [-10*], Hidebound [-5], No Sense of Humor [-10], Low Empathy [-20], Oblivious [-5], Shyness [-5 to -20], Social Stigma [Varies], or Truthfulness [-5*]. • A further -20 points chosen from the above traits or from the following (representing damage): Reduced Basic Speed [-5 per -0.25], Amnesia [-10], Disturbing Voice [-10], Maintenance [Varies], Noisy 1-2 [-2 to -4], One Eye [-15], or One Arm [-20] or One Hand [-15].

Primary Skills: Brawling (E) DX+2 [4]-12; Diagnosis (H) IQ [4]-12; Hazardous Materials (Biological, Chemical, or Radioactive) (A) IQ+1 [4]-13; Pharmacy (Synthetic) (H) IQ [4]-12; Physician (H) IQ+1 [8]-13; and Surgery (VH) IQ-1 [4]-11†. • Spend 4 points for +1 to any primary skill or on another Hazardous Materials specialty.

Secondary Skills: Three of Area Knowledge (any) or Current Affairs (Regional), both (E) IQ+1 [2]-13; Scrounging (E) Per+1 [2]-13; or Tracking (A) Per [2]-12 • Two of Beam Weapons (any), Guns (any), or Knife, all (E) DX+2 [4]-12; Climbing, Cloak, Shortsword, Staff, Stealth, Throwing, or Wrestling, all (A) DX+1 [4]-11; Acrobatics or Judo, both (H) DX [4]-10, or Intimidation (A) Will+1 [4]-13.

Background Skills: Computer Operation (E) IQ+1 [2]-13. • Four of Bicycling (E) DX [1]-10; Driving (any) DX-1 [1]-9; Cartography, Disguise (Human), Electronics Operation (Medical), or Mechanic (Robotics), all (A) IQ-1 [1]-11; Chemistry or Expert Skill (Mutants), all (H) IQ-2 [1]-10; Biology (VH) IQ-3 [1]-9; Observation (A) Per-1 [1]-11; or spend 1 point on any unchosen primary or secondary skill.

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

† Will benefit from doll’s High Manual Dexterity (not factored in here).

ABOUT THE COLUMNIST

David L. Pulver is a Canadian freelance author. An avid science-fiction 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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WARPING MONSTERS INTO MUTANTS

BY PETER V. DELL'ORTO

Some versions of the apocalypse feature little more than people gone savage and the horrors of radiation. Many more, though, include creatures and humans warped and twisted by radiation, toxic goo, and superscience into terrible threats. A great source for dangerous “things” is the *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy Monsters* line of books. Some of them – bugbears, electric jellies, flesh-eating apes – are natural fits as mutated threats.

But fantasy monsters are set up for a very different set of assumptions. Wasteland wanderers might have stop signs for shields and swords made of duct-tape handled lawnmower blades, but they also generally have guns, grenades, and other high-tech unfairness. Monsters need to be boosted to match. Here are some guidelines for turning creatures designed for *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy* into threats for *GURPS After the End*.

CONVERSION

There are two approaches for *quickly* using fantasy-themed monsters in a post-apocalyptic game.

Option 1: As-is. The easiest and most expedient way to populate post-apocalypse wastelands with fantasy monsters is to use them unchanged. Ignore any magical dependencies and spells, explain their powers with pseudo-science instead of magic, and set them on the PCs. Of course, if the campaign is a spells-and-radiation kind of mutants and mayhem game, simply leave those magical powers intact!

Options 2: Convert them to the assumptions of the new game.

Option 1 is pretty simple – just grab the monster, call it a mutant, possibly give it a superficial appearance change (also known as a reskin) and go. This article expands on Option 2.

Name and Description

The name and description don't *have* to change, but if you adjust a threat's abilities, you may as well alter the appearance and what it's called. When tweaking the appearance, consider

how to make it sound “realistic”; a glowing demon fits better as a radiation-lit mutant, for example. Change the name to match its mutated background or new abilities.

Attributes and Secondary Characteristics

Attributes are generally unchanged. Purely physical stats like ST and DX can always be raised to make a more lethal (or larger) critter. HT is best left alone; most *Dungeon Fantasy* creatures already have appropriate HT to deal with lethal threats.

If you need a feral mutant instead of an intelligent creature, lower IQ to animal levels (6 or less) and add Bestial or Wild Animal to traits. Conversely, raise IQ to at least sapient level (7 or higher) and remove Wild Animal from traits when you want something smart. Either way, leave Will and Per alone if they're higher than the current IQ level – sapient or animal-like, creatures need Per to hunt and Will to resist wastelanders' skills.

DR

Damage Resistance is generally appropriate for dealing with melee attacks, even high-damage ones. Leave DR bought with Tough Skin unchanged. Double the DR of creatures with any kind of hard carapace, armored hide, or supernatural (here, superscience) durability, or which are made out of hard materials. Even this won't really impress high-velocity guns, but it will make pistols, black-powder conversions, and cross-bows much less threatening.

Attacks

Melee attacks are unchanged (unless you raised ST or DX, above.) However, mutants that depend solely on natural brute-force melee attacks would do well to have better offense versus armor. Consider adding a (2) Armor Divisor to critters such as trolls, spheres of madness, void brutes (specifically, its bite attack), etc. This allows them to be a more immediate threat against high-tech armor but also to get in some damage before high-tech weapons defeat them!

Bob McKenzie: Fleshy-headed mutant, are you friendly?

Doug McKenzie: No way, eh? Radiation has made me an enemy of civilization!

– **Strange Brew**

Creatures which depend on melee weapons can always use higher-tech versions with superior statistics.

Ranged Attacks generally assume combat with low-tech weapons at close range against low to moderate DR. Guns change this equation. In order for monsters to keep up, ranged attacks must be improved. *Maledictions* use the *Size and Speed/Range Table* instead of -1 per yard. Attacks that already use that table are unchanged. *Range* is multiplied by 10. For example, an eye of death's gaze would reach 200 yards, not 20, and a flame lord's fire attack would be 100/1,000, not 10/100.

Traits

Only a few traits need translating. Dependency (Mana) works better as Dependency (Radiation), Dependency (Toxic slime), Dependency (Pathogen-filled zone), Dependency (Broadcast power), etc. – depending on the nature of the apocalypse. Supernatural traits like Unkillable or Supernatural Durability should either be removed, or given a mundane Achilles' Heel.

Class

These are less relevant to *After the End* (unless your setting features magic), but a few call for additional trait changes Animal, Hybrid, Mundane, Plant, and Slime can stay as-is.

Construct: These are robots or machines, not golems, but they are otherwise unchanged. If they're clockwork or robotic instead of solid, change Injury Tolerance (Homogenous) to (Unliving), but consider increasing their DR or HP to make up for the extra Vulnerability.

Demon, Divine Servitor, Elder Thing; Elemental, Faerie: Remove their supernatural weaknesses (Dread of holy objects, Vulnerability to Pentagram, etc.).

Undead: These are spawned by plagues or nanotech rather than magic. Ghostly undead might be holographic machine projections instead!

Spells

Remove any spells from the creature. If it needs them to be an effective threat, give the monster enhanced melee attacks, weapons, or mutant abilities which are similar to the spells (see *Are We Not Men?* on pp. 4-12, and *GURPS After the End 1: Wastelanders*, pp. 26-27).

Bellow Lungs and Mighty Roar are particularly appropriate.

Magic Resistance becomes Natural Anti-Rad (*Wastelanders*, p. 27). Magic Resistance 1-4 becomes Natural Anti-Rad 1, Magic Resistance 5-9 becomes Natural Anti-Rad 2, and Magic Resistance 10+ becomes Natural Anti-Rad 3.

Creatures which depend solely on magic to fight – liches and wizard or cleric versions of humanoids especially – are best not converted at all. Either make mutated leader-type versions of the base race with mutations using the rules from *Wastelanders*, pp. 25-27, or use the creature as inspiration for a new mutant version.

Notes

Finally, adjust any notes to match the new version of the monster. Customize as needed – a flat one-pass change will work in a pinch but it's worth including a little tweak here or there to make the monster stand out. This can be adding traits (Telescopic Vision to a critter with a new long-ranged attack), changing out or removing abilities that don't fit any more (swapping Unkillable for more HP), and otherwise adding final touches that say "mutant horror" instead of "dungeon dweller." For suggested physical features associated with various mutant abilities, see *Are We Not Men?* on pp. 4-12.

SPECIAL ATTACKS?

Monsters often have special attacks that don't quite fit into a post-apocalyptic world. Medusa's petrifying gaze, a dragon's fiery breath, or the life-draining touch of a Demon From Between the Stars might seem less like chocolate in your peanut butter than orange juice in your milk. Here are some simple swaps that provide a better post-apocalyptic feel. They're all optional – if the original version works for your wasteland mutant, keep it!

Breath Attacks: If a "breath weapon" feels too fantasy, change it to a gaze attack. Statistics are unchanged, but the attack emanates from the eyes instead – or from eye-like spots, if it lacks eyes.

Damaging Aura: Change it to Nuclear Core (*GURPS After the End 1: Wastelanders*, p. 26).

Deadly Gaze: Swap in eye lasers. Change the damage type to *tight-beam burning* with a (5) armor divisor, add Innate Attack (Beam) at DX+5. Change Acc to 3, Range to 100/1,000, and RoF to 1. If the deadly gaze is cosmic (ignores all armor), triple base damage!

Fire Attacks: Relabel them as "plasma," or swap them for corrosion or electrical attacks (use the Elemental prefix from *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy Monsters 1*, p. 37). Alternatively, you can make it radioactive: reduce damage (somewhere between 1/4 and 1/10 is fair) and have it damage RP rather than HP; DR no longer protects.

Petrification Gaze: Change the effect to Paralysis (p. B429); other effects, including duration, remain. If duration is permanent, change it to 20-HT hours, instead – there aren't many Remove Paralysis spells in a nonfantasy world!

The list above are just suggestions – feel free to add to it. Monsters that rust metal in fantasy might turn them to rubber instead; charm gazes control robots or become psionic mind control, deadly screams can be sonic attacks, and so on.

PREFIXES AND MUTATIONS

Once you're done converting a monster, you have to decide if you want to change it further. There are two simple ways to do this – mutations and prefixes.

Mutations

Use the rules for mutations from *Wastelanders*, pp. 25-27. For a balanced approach, offensive-minded creatures (for example, eyes of death or Demons From Between the Stars) do better with defensive and utility mutations. Defensive-minded creatures (trolls, most slimes and oozes, etc.) often need a little more firepower, and benefit most from attack mutations.

Prefixes

Some of the prefixes from *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy Monsters 1* work well mechanically for wasteland creatures. Others are just inappropriate unless you're mixing magic and mutants. Others need some changes. If a prefix isn't mentioned, use it as-is!

Chaos: Such creatures aren't changed by the unformed stuff of the universe, they're altered by meddling with radiation and DNA. Otherwise this is unchanged.

Distorted: This is a good shorthand prefix for mutation from toxic slime, drinking too much irradiated soda, or messing with experimental reactors.

Elemental: The traditional "four elements" don't really feel very post-apocalypse, which can make cold and fire seem out of place. But acid, electricity, energy drain, and poison all fit thematically. Energy drain might be described as "life-sapping cold" instead of magical draining, however.

Ghostly: Generally not appropriate.

Possessed: Unless you've got demons and good and evil, this isn't appropriate.

Psycho Killer: The Extra Life isn't a supernatural benefit, just an inexplicable kind of mutation.

Undead: See the notes on the undead monster class (p. 25). This prefix is mostly useful for things that look, smell, act, and deal with damage like the undead, even if they aren't undead per se. Use as written for these "things."

SPECIFIC MONSTER NOTES

Here are some notes on some specific monsters from the *Dungeon Fantasy* canon and how to turn them into mutated horrors. Only the changed stats are listed!

Burning Eye (was Eye of Death)

Dungeon Fantasy Monsters 1, p. 14

Description is unchanged, except that the eye narrows to a tight focus when it's ready to fire. It's not clear where flying, giant, anti-gravity eyes originated, but here they are.

Death Gaze range becomes 200, or replace the gaze with Laser Eye (18): 3d(5) tight beam burning, Acc 3, RoF 1, Range 100/1,000. Fires a bolt of X-ray laser light invisible to the naked eye. Magic Resistance 10 becomes Natural Anti-Rad 3. Class becomes Mundane. Slicing off its focusing lens takes a Surgery roll, not Alchemy!

Toximan (was Flame Lord)

Dungeon Fantasy Monsters 1, p. 15

Description changes from a flaming humanoid to a glowing, yellowed humanoid with molten features and dripping flesh. Little drops of corrosive acid splatter around when it moves. All attacks remain the same, but damage changes from *burning* to *corrosion*. Change DR to 8 and DR 18 (Limited, Heat/Fire) to DR 36 (Limited, Acid/Corrosion). Vulnerability is to water-based attacks. Its Achilles' Heel becomes damage from any base or immersion in water.

Prisoner Cyborg

(was Golem-Armor Swordsmen)

GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 2: Dungeons, p. 24

This cyborg consists of a unfortunate victim wired and surgically meshed inside of a suit of self-propelled power armor. They take a lot of punishment – you not only have to kill the wearer, but then put the suit back down as it reverts to emergency power and default programming.

DR becomes 34. Weapon becomes a club (typically a piece of rebar or scrap metal) and damage becomes crushing. *Usually*

has a firearm or laser of some kind. Typically this is a laser pistol, assault carbine, or TASE (*GURPS After the End 2: The New World*, p. 26). Circuit boards and wiring can be pulled out for scrap worth \$1d×100.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Peter V. Dell'Orto is the author of numerous *GURPS* articles for *Pyramid* magazine; author of *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 12: Ninja*, and *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy Denizens: Barbarians*; and co-author of *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 15: Henchmen*, *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy Monsters 1*, *GURPS Low-Tech*, *GURPS Low-Tech Companion 2: Weapons and Warriors*, *GURPS Martial Arts*, and *GURPS Martial Arts: Gladiators*. He also writes the blog *Dungeon Fantastic* at dungeonfantastic.blogspot.com.

RIGHT TO ARM BEARS

A simple fix for creatures who need some offensive firepower is to arm them – or swap in better weapons.

This can be a simple color change (exchange a medium shield for a stop sign, a hammer for a broken-off parking meter, a light club for a baseball bat) or a total weapon replacement. Dinomen might mix in pistols and shotguns with their usual hatchets. Siege beasts come standard with hammers, but make excellent crew-served weapon wielders instead; dump the hammer and bolt on a belt-fed M60 or a rocket launcher. Peshkali might carry a six-pack of pistols or three shotguns as well as clubs or swords.

You can modify the mutant to allow it to use guns. To ensure a creature can rely on a weapon, remove (or mitigate) traits like Bad Grip, No Fine Manipulators, and No Manipulators. Adding human-like arms and guns to creatures is very common in post-apocalyptic art.



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SURVIVAL AT THE END

BY CHRISTOPHER R. RICE

Surviving in the remains of the old world is never easy, and sometimes you have to “make do.” This article explores various survival techniques, from filtering water to building fires without lighters or matches. It also covers ways to create equipment with what you have at hand. It’s useful both to those running *GURPS After the End* campaigns and anyone trying to survive in the wild. It offers some new rules and optional detailed methods to perform some tasks already covered in *GURPS After the End 2: The New World*. Useful, but not required are *GURPS After the End 1: Wastelanders*, *GURPS High-Tech*, *GURPS Low-Tech*, and *GURPS Low-Tech Companions 3: Daily Life and Economics*.

Survival Skill Modifiers

Survival skills are required for all wastelanders who aren’t suicidal. While *The New World* provides adequate rules for finding enough food, water, and shelter, the information here expands on them and gives real-world examples.

As a guideline, the GM should allow **Scrounging** as a complementary skill roll to *any* survival task – a stick of the right shape, a rock in the right place, or a v-shaped vine can all make the difference!

The New World leaves it to the GM to decide what modifiers a given area gives. Should a random modifier be desired, the GM may refer to the following table.

Roll	Quality	Skill Modifier*	Required Time Per Gathering Attempt
3-4	Idyllic	+6	2d attempts per hour
5-6	Verdant	+4	1d attempts per hour
7-8	Rich	+2	30 minutes
9-10	Typical	+0	1 hour
11-12	Sparse	-2	1d-1 hours (minimum 1 hour)
13-14	Barren	-4	1d+2 hours
15-16	Desolate	-6	1d+4 hours
17-18	Wasteland	-8	1d+6 hours

* Rolls are at an *additional* -1 in arctic or desert climates, and a further -2 for radioactive zones.

NATURE’S BOUNTY

There are a multitude of plants (*far* too many to list) that are not consumed in modern society, but are edible and nutritious. For instance, Indian lettuce (*claytonia perfoliata*) looks

like a weed, but is quite tasty. Some plants are only partially poisonous, with the rest being edible. For example, pokeweed (*phytolacca americana*) is a spinach-like green whose leaves and stems can be consumed *if* boiled first *and* if they have no berries (which can be used as a red dye). However, the *roots* can be deadly even if boiled. Because of this, the GM may require a *Per*-based **Naturalist**, **Pharmacy (Herbal)**, or **Poisons** roll to find suitable plants.

Mushrooms are plentiful in nature and even easier to grow, but because of the dangerous similarities between some breeds, the GM should apply a -2 to -6 familiarity penalty on *Per*-based **Naturalist** or **Survival** rolls for harvesting them. For example, the destroying angel mushroom (*amanita ocreata*) looks *very* similar to coccora mushrooms (*amanita calyp-troderma*); one is edible, and the other *slowly, painfully kills* the consumer. Can *you* tell which is which from a picture?

Sphagnum moss grows *everywhere* in the northern hemisphere. It can be used to clean wounds and has been relied on for thousands of years as a wound packing material (even as late as World War I). When pulped, it provides an antiseptic as useful as iodine. It’s been used as diaper padding, kindling, and toilet paper. Further, when dried, it’s an excellent thermal insulator.

To use **Gardening** (or **Farming**) in an *After the End* campaigns, adopt the following simplified rules: Properly tended garden (mostly staples and some vegetables) provide 10 meals/week on a successful roll, modified by the *Meals/Hour* ratio under *Faster Gathering* (*The New World*, p. 30). This requires at least 2 hours/meal (1 hour on a critical success!) spent pulling weeds, fertilizing, irrigating, and other agricultural activities. A failed roll still produces *some* food (2 meals worth), while a critical failure results in *no* food *and* wasted time. This is for *small* gardens (approximately 600 square feet); multiply the yield (and required man-hours) for larger areas.

Long-term planners can clean tainted areas by planting certain species of vegetation. For example, the fast-growing water hyacinth (*eichhornia crassipes*) is excellent at removing pollutants like lead and mercury. Sunflowers (*helianthus*) can absorb heavy metals and radioisotopes from tainted soil; they were planted after the Chernobyl incident. Cannabis can absorb heavy metals from contaminated soil and has numerous other uses. However, as should be needless to say, *do not breathe fumes from or eat a plant used like this!* The pollutants have been incorporated into the plant itself. Likewise, mulching these plants would simply put the pollutants back into the ground . . .

GAME TRAPS

A multitude of real-world methods for catching small game are easy to make and set up. Use the rules for gathering plants when looking for grubs, bugs, and other crawly edibles.

For creatures such as rabbits or ground fowl (e.g., grouse), the *snare trap* is easiest to make. It's simply a loop of wire or rope hung at neck level (and is sometimes combined with other traps) near a game trail. This requires a roll against **Traps** at +1 or **Survival** and takes 2-5 minutes.

A *funnel trap* also requires a nearby animal trail. Use **Camouflage** with local debris to build a "funnel" (leaves and sticks work best for this) toward where you either set a snare or use a basket (or cage). When an animal passes through, it becomes trapped. This trap requires a roll against **Traps** or **Survival** at -1 and takes 15 minutes to construct.

Paiute deadfalls are better for rodents and similar game, but can work on larger animals. They use two large flat stones (or anything flat and heavy), with one on the ground and the other at an acute angle held by a "figure four" stick (or string). Bait is placed on the inner stick shaft. When set off, the stone falls and crushes anything in between. These deadfalls can be reset by replacing the stick and adding new bait; reduce the set-up time by half. Each stone must weigh at least 5 × (average weight of the game) to ensure a killing blow. For example, rabbits average 2.5 lbs. and thus require stones of at least 12.5 lbs. Creating a deadfall requires a roll against **Traps** at -1 or **Survival** at -2 and takes 15-20 minutes.

Spring snares consist of bait, a sapling tree, an L-shaped notched ground stake, and rope. The spring snare can be made large enough to catch small boars if appropriate materials are available. When the bait on the notched stick is disturbed, the sapling springs upward and the looped rope constricts around the animal's neck or limb. If lacking in trees, compressed truck springs, car antennas, and steel cable work as well or better; see *Post-Apocalyptic Substitutions* (p. 31) for more ideas. Sometimes spring snares can be reset, but usually the animal's struggling destroys the elasticity of the sapling. Make a HT roll (most saplings have HT 10), at -1 per 5 lbs. of weight after the first 5 lbs. of the animal caught. Failure means the sapling cannot be used for a snare again, critical failure, or failure by 5+ means the trapped animal *escapes!* Spring snares require a roll against **Traps** at -2 or **Survival** at -3 roll and takes 10-15 minutes.

A *foothold trap* is a primitive form of the iconic leg-hold trap (which most of us think of when we hear the word trap thanks to *Looney Tunes*). Like its steel cousin, the foothold trap disables prey by hindering their movement. It is created by digging a small pit (5" to 6" wide and 20" deep) and then lining the top of the hole with sharpened wooden stakes at regular intervals on the sides. Next, a rope with a slipknot is tied to a nearby tree, rocky outcropping, etc., with the loop

laid atop the hole. Finally, cover the whole with debris to hide it. Animals that slip in are impaled on the stakes (1d-2 impaling). Should the prey break free, the rope keeps it bound. Like the spring snare, the heavier the animal, the harder it is to trap. Creating a foothold trap requires a roll against **Traps** or **Survival** at -1 (and an extra -2 if lacking digging implements) and takes 30-45 minutes.

A *trapping pit* is a simple (if time consuming) trap to make. The sides are squared like a grave or have a steep slope like an inverted pyramid. As a rule, a pit's depth must be *twice* the height of the creature it intends to trap. Optionally, figure a given prey's high jump and use 1.5× that value as the minimum pit depth. Making trapping pits requires a roll against *HT*-based **Traps** or **Survival** at -1 (at an extra -2 for lacking digging implements) and at least an hour. See *Digging*, pp. B350-B351 for a more detailed approach.

Gritty Survival

As an optional rule, the GM may decide that even *basic* survival tires people. Hunting, gathering, and building traps all require energy – energy the survivors might not get back. To represent this, the GM can charge 1 FP per hour of survival tasks, with a further +1 FP in arctic or desert environments. Pacing yourself and knowing when to rest is as much a part of survival as knowing what plants can be eaten or where to find game.

FISHING AND WATER TRAPS

Fish and other ambulatory aquatic life (e.g., crabs) can be caught with nets, fishing poles, or less attention-demanding traps.

A *bottle trap* (sometimes called pot traps) is a cylindrical container with an inverted funnel at the entrance. Fish get in, but become confused by the shape and cannot get out. This requires a roll against **DX** at -2, **Traps**, or **Survival** at -1. Optionally, roll against **Fishing** at +2 or **Professional Skill (Weaver)** instead, if the campaign features these skills. Placement requires only knowing where the fish are and anchoring the bottle, which takes 2-5 minutes. Resetting the trap takes a negligible amount of time.

A *tide net* is simply a mesh (construction and safety netting work in a pinch!) that is staked or tied off with rocks to anchor it at the bottom of a suitable body of water, and something to float the net to the surface on the top (wood, Styrofoam, and plastic bottles are perfect). As the tide rises, so does the net, which entangles fish. When the tide recedes, the catch is collected and the net is left for the next tide. This requires a roll against **Knot-Tying** at +1, **Traps**, or **Survival** at -1 and takes 30-45 minutes of work.

Improvise, Adapt, and Overcome.

– *United States Marine Core unofficial mantra*

OPTIONAL RULE: DETAILED FISHING

The rules for *Gathering* (*The New World*, p. 30) intentionally exclude the Fishing skill (p. B195) for simplicity's sake. Normally, fishing is subsumed in rolls for collecting plants and small game, but the GM may use the following options if make fishing as important as hunting big game. These also apply to clamming, crabbing, and similar tasks.

1. Use **Naturalist**, **Navigation (Land)**, or **Survival** to locate a suitable water source, at a cumulative -2 for every previous fishing attempt (successful or not) in the same location each day. In a group, use the single best skill. Sometimes the area must be prepared (e.g., breaking through a layer of ice on a frozen lake). On a success of 3 or more (or a critical success), multiply the final amount of meals gained by (total margin / 4) if step 2 succeeds – you

found a school of fish, were present for a salmon spawn, found an untouched industrial pond, etc.!

2. Once on location, fishers make a roll against the better of **Naturalist** or **Survival**. The GM may also allow a roll against an appropriate weapon skill, such as **Bow**, **Crossbow**, **Net**, or **Spear**. Those using passive traps (*Fishing and Water Traps*, pp. 29-30) can rely on **Traps** as either the primary skill or a complementary skill.

In all cases, use the rules for *Gathering* to determine the total number of meals acquired (multiplied by any bonus from step 1). Triple the total yield for two or more fishermen using a large net. The Fishing skill is best applied as a complementary skill that gives an *additional* +1 to skill rolls (e.g., +2 on a success, +3 on a critical success, -0 on a failure, and -1 on a critical failure).

Fishing weirs are constructed like large bottle traps (see p. 29) rendered in a two-dimensional format. Stake off a section of a suitable body of water using debris (often sticks, but PVC pipe, broom handles, and bike spokes work), leaving only a single way in. A “funnel” shape is created at the other end. Like the bottle trap, fish go in, but can't find their way out. Fishing weirs in *flowing* water have no penalty; otherwise all rolls are at an additional -2. Fishing weirs require a roll against **Per** at -2, **Traps**, or **Survival** at -1, and an hour of work.

*The spirit finds a way
to be born. Instinct seeks
for ways to survive*

– Toba Beta

and similar traits *always* try to fight. These rules apply *only* to IQ 1-5 animals.

For a quick method to determine *what* the PCs are hunting, use the following table. Note that this table assumes some non-native animals, like lions or elephants, escaped from zoos and established breeding populations.

Roll	SM	Examples
2	+2 or more	Elephants, horses, oxen
3-4	on the large side of +1	Grizzly bears, large boars, lions, llamas, alpacas
5-6	on the large side of 0	Black bears, wolves
7	-1	Small boars, rattlesnakes
8-9	on the small side of 0	Chimpanzees, dogs, pythons
10-11	on the small side of +1	Deer, emus, gorillas, ostriches, cassowaries
12	A pack or herd*	

* Roll again for SM; reroll if this result comes up again. There are 3d if SM -1, 2d if SM 0, and 1d if larger.

HUNTING

If desired, the size of the intended prey (and thus the danger) may be factored into the rules on pp. 30-31 of *The New World*. Generally, the larger the creature, the easier it is to track. The GM can represent this by adding a modifier to the initial **Tracking** roll from step 1 equal to *half* the Size Modifier of the prey; round up. Add the full modifier in forests, jungles, and similar terrain.

Should the GM wish to determine if an animal runs or fights, make a *Morale Check* (p. B561). Ignore those modifiers and instead use the following:

- 2 for each of Combat Reflexes, Bad Temper, and Bloodlust.
 - 1 per level of Fearlessness or -8 for Unfazeable.
 - +1 per level of Fearfulness.
 - +1 per doubling of the number of hunters in the party after the first two (e.g., +1 for four, +2 for eight, etc.)
- Add the average hunter's SM and subtract the prey's SM.

Creatures with Cowardice or an appropriate Phobia *always* try to flee, while those with Uncontrollable Appetite

WATER, WATER EVERYWHERE . . .

Finding water in *The New World* requires a **Prospecting** or **Survival** roll with +10 in any climate but desert. Realistically, the amount of water found varies *considerably*. The GM who wants variance can roll 3d6 in nondesert climates and 1d-3 in desert climates. It should be noted that some climates, notably jungles, are surprisingly *sparse* on potable water. Even processed jungle water is suspect, and most experienced explorers prefer water vines or seeps (see *But Not a Drop to Drink*, pp. 31-32).

Wastelanders may opt to make a Hearing or Smell-based **Survival** roll instead of their normal roll. Water has a *highly* distinct smell for those trained to notice it, and the buzzing of insect wings or sound of moving water is as often as much an indicator as anything else.

... BUT NOT A DROP TO DRINK

The New World presents a quick method to determine if found water can be purified or made drinkable. But *how* is this done? Several methods exist that rely on minimal equipment.

Distilling water requires at least two containers. They must have tubing leading from one sealed container to the other. Copper pipes, industrial outlet conduit, and medical tubing are all great for this. Seal the starting container as tightly as possible to avoid vapor escaping and add water, then heat it. The second container is kept as cool as possible (e.g., buried in the ground or in a snowbank). The vapor travels through the tubing to the cooler container where it condenses into water. This takes approximately 30 minutes per pint of distilled water and requires at least twice that amount for boiling. The fire consumes 2-5 lbs. of solid fuel (e.g., wood or dung) for every hour of operation. This works especially well on water with chemical impurities – e.g., saltwater or irradiated water. (Radioactive water contains irradiated particles and is not itself radioactive.) Distilling requires a roll against **Chemistry** at +4, **Naturalist** at -4, or **Survival** at -1. A successful roll makes unsafe water safe regardless of the previous roll to find drinkable water.

Filtering water involves passing it through a layer (or layers) of material. One easy way uses several pieces of cloth (or a large cloth folded over several times) and a wide-mouth container. This only makes the water clearer; it does little for disease prevention. In another, more thorough method, water is poured on sod or similar materials on the topmost layer; the second contains charcoal or wood pulp, while the third has clay or sand. This triple method of filtration is good enough to give +2 to HT rolls to resist waterborne infections or diseases. This requires a roll against **Chemistry** at +1, **Naturalist**, or **Survival** at -1, and takes an hour to set up.

Solar stills can be easily improvised if the group doesn't have a manufactured one. They work as per *High-Tech*, but need nothing more than a hole (or other container), sheets of clear plastic (e.g., a lawn bag), water-containing materials (e.g., urine, mud, wet or crushed plants, skunky beer, etc.), a couple of weights, and a container. Sometimes tubing or a straw is used to drink collected water so as not to disturb the still. A hole is dug and the bottom lined with plastic. The container is placed in the middle, surrounded by the water-containing material. Another sheet of plastic is secured on top. The plastic is dimpled toward the container's opening. When the sun evaporates the water, it

collects on the dimple and drips into the container. Treat as per the solar water still (*GURPS High-Tech*, p. 59), but reclaimed water is limited to a pint. A roll against **Chemistry** at +3, **Naturalist** at -2, or **Survival** at +1 raises this to a quart, while a failure reduces it to a mere cup of liquid! Water takes 8-12 hours to collect in the container.

Pasteurizing requires bringing water to at least 160° F for a minimum of 15 to 30 seconds and kills most fungi, bacteria, and viruses. This needs no roll with proper equipment. It can be done with improvised equipment with a roll against **Naturalist** at -3 or **Survival**. Plastic bottles, plants (hollowed agave stalks, bull kelp, and bamboo are good), and even *animal* skin "containers" (e.g., a tied-off rabbit skin or snakeskin) have all been used to boil water using indirect flame. Boiling can also be achieved with water-resistant, but flammable items (e.g., a canvas hat) by using *hot rocks* (rocks heated on a fire). The rocks are placed in the container and boil the water without igniting the container.

POST-APOCALYPTIC SUBSTITUTIONS

The ruins of the old world are more likely to have junk lying around than intact gear. For those with **Scrounging**, one person's junk becomes another person's treasure.

Bottles can be used to pasteurize water (see above), catch distilled water (see above), or create fish traps (pp. 29-20). When filled with water, clear bottles can serve as magnifying glasses for creating fire (see *Fire-Starting Methods*, p. 33). Sealed, empty plastic bottles can be floats for fishing poles or nets. When cut and braided, plastic makes surprisingly strong rope or baskets.

Dental floss can suture wounds, be used as fishing line, secure arrowheads, or be used in a snare (see *Game Traps*, p. 30) for small game.

Unused sanitary napkins and tampons make excellent water filters, bandages, and kindling.

Bike spokes and wire coat hangers can be turned into fishing spears, arrow or spear tips, cooking spits, tent or spikes. They hold a container over a fire.

Metal cans can be used for cooking or boiling water. The tab can be used to create a fishhook, while a sealed (with glue or pine pitch), empty can makes a good fishing float. When highly polished, they can start fires (pp. 32-33) or function as signaling devices. Cut properly, one can function as a socket for a firebow (see *Fire-Starting Methods*, p. 33) or make cheap arrowheads. Cans also make perfect perimeter alarms (see *Camping, The New World*, p. 32).

Post-apocalyptic accelerants (see *Fire-Starting*, pp. 32-33) include alcohol, lip balm, petroleum jelly, hairspray, pine pitch, glue, hand sanitizer, old cooking grease, and gel deodorant.

Kindling (see *Fire-Starting*, pp. 32-33) includes junk food (*especially* those heavy in oil, like corn chips), dryer lint (which also makes useful bandages), newspapers, magazines, advertisement fliers, books, cotton balls, and duct tape.

Fire starters (see *Fire-Starting*, pp. 32-33) include empty cigarette lighters (if they can still spark), functioning household batteries with foil or wire to touch the ends, car batteries with terminal cables, flashlights with broken bulbs, propane-grill igniters, and any kind of functioning battery in conjunction with steel wool.

WASTELAND SURVIVAL PERKS

Here are a few perks for those in the wilderness.

Hunter's Strike

Prerequisites: Any weapon skill 16+ and Stealth 16+.

If your prey bolts while hunting (*The New World*, p. 31), you ignore the skill cap of 9 for melee weapons or bulk penalty for ranged weapons during a Move and Attack, for your *first* attack.

In a Pinch†

Prerequisites: Skill 16+ and Scrounging 16+.

Whenever you use a skill to improvise equipment, treat it as *basic* equipment instead. When you have *no* equipment, treat it as improvised equipment. This doesn't mean you can make fire magically appear, but rather you can make do with nearby materials. You must specialize by either skill or task. For example, you could specialize in Survival (Island/Beach) allowing you to light fires, boil water, husk coconuts, etc. using improvised equipment as if they were basic equipment. Similarly, In a Pinch (Fire-starting) allows you to use *any* skill with this perk to start fires, as long as you know it (and Scrounging) at 16+.

Lay of the Land

Prerequisites: Tracking 16+ and either Area Knowledge or Survival.

Whenever you need to roll against Tracking to locate game to hunt (*The New World*, p. 31), there is no need to roll as long as your *effective* skill level remains at 16+. The only applies in areas covered by your Area Knowledge skill(s) or terrain types covered by your Survival skill(s).

One with Nature

Prerequisites: HT 10+ and either Area Knowledge, Naturalist, or Survival 16+.

Whenever you roll a critical failure on a gathering skill that result in injury, make an HT-based skill roll at -5. Success means you *ignore* the ill effects of your failure and treat it as a normal failure. If disease or radiation is an issue, subtract your margin of success on this roll from your margin of failure to determine the number of tainted meals you have.

Finally, potable water can be found *naturally* (even in water-sparse environments). *Water seeps* are small holes dug in dry river or lake beds or beside otherwise undrinkable bodies of water. A minimum depth of 2' is typical. Water collects slowly in the hole and uses the ground as a purifier. This requires a roll against **Naturalist** or **Survival** with a penalty equal to the original roll to find water (*The New World*, p. 31).

Some plants, notably the tropical "water vine" (either *cissus hypoglauca* or *vitis tiliifolia*), trap water within their woody vines. Each such vine can provide a 1/4 to 1/2 cup of water when fully drained. Sphagnum moss has naturally antiseptic properties, making the water it collects safe to drink (see *Nature's Bounty*, p. 28, for more uses).

Another method for finding natural water is a *rain catch*. Rain catches are open containers, plastic sheeting, and similar vessels left in the rain. It takes an approximately 3.25

square-foot area to accumulate one gallon of water per 1/2" of rainfall. For example, a garbage bag canted to the side so that rainwater runoff collects in a canteen provides 1.07 gallons of water from 1" of rainfall. Note that tainted rain produces tainted water!

FIRE-STARTING

The GM should assume that personal basics (p. B288) have butane-less lighters with intact flints (treat as flint and steel for starting times; p. 33). Lacking matches or such improvised gear, fire can still be made as it has been for thousands of years – with friction.

Having a fire can mean life or death in the wilderness, but *The New World* sweeps this under typical **Survival** tasks. Should the GM want a more detailed method, use the following system.

1. Roll against the better of **Per** at -5, **Naturalist** at -3, or **Survival** to locate appropriate kindling if you have none. This takes 1d minutes in most climates. If constructing a fire-bow, pump drill, etc., roll against **Machinist** at +1 or **Survival** at -1 to construct a working device. Optionally, prepared tinder ("fuzz sticks," char cloth, magnesium shavings, petroleum infused cotton balls rolled in sawdust, etc.) can be created with a roll against **Naturalist** at -3, or **Survival**. Done properly, this gives a bonus equal to margin of success (up to +4 to skill rolls for step 2).

2. If you have a fire bundle or coals from another fire, skip to step 3. Otherwise, spend the requisite amount of time (see the table on p. 33) for the fire-starting method and make a roll against **IQ** at -4, **Per** at -5, **Naturalist** at -3, or **Survival**, *plus* modifiers for method. Accelerants *halve* times in most cases, but some high-tech methods (such as using road flares or gasoline) *quarter* it. *Double* this time if *any* of the components are not dry. Completely wet kindling can only be lit by high-tech methods (e.g., magnesium sticks, blowtorches, etc.)

or with the help of accelerants. The GM may allow a roll at -10 and *quadruple* starting times when using low-tech methods to ignite wet kindling. For every three minutes using any friction method, lose 1 FP (round up; minimum of 1 FP).

Success means you've lit a flame and proceed to step 3. Failure means you have to start over and wasted materials equal to (10% × *twice* margin of failure); critical failure causes 1 point of injury (*1d* if using volatile accelerants!)

3. Make a second roll against **IQ** at -1, **Per** at -2, **Naturalist**, or **Survival** at +3 to keep the fire going. If the wind is blowing over 10 mph, add a -1 per 10 mph (round up). This requires a minimum of *twice* the time you spent during step 2. On a success, proceed to step 4. Failure means the flame went out, though the kindling can be reused. Failure by 3 or *more* means the kindling has been consumed. Critical failure causes injury per step 2.

4. You now have a fire that won't go out unless it's exposed to large amounts of water or stops getting fuel.

Fire-Starting Methods

Firebows resemble a small bow with a headless arrow called a spindle. The bowstring is twisted around the spindle, which is held by a "socket" (usually a stone or hunk of wood, but anything with an indentation works) at one end, while the other end is pressed against a hearthboard (a soft wood with a flat edge and notch) and spun until an ember forms. The *hand drill* works the same way, but is operated by spinning your hands down the shaft instead of using a bow. A *pump drill* works like a fire-bow, but has a weight on the bottom so that it spins vertically instead horizontally when the bow is pressed downward.

Friction blocks are two pieces of flat, notched wood rubbed against one another until heated dust forms an ember. *Fire pistons* use a cylinder with a tight fitting shaft that, when

Uncle Iroh: Zuko, remember that plant that I thought might be tea?

Prince Zuko: You didn't.

Uncle Iroh: I did . . . and it wasn't.

Prince Zuko: Yah!

Uncle Iroh: When the rash spreads to my throat I will stop breathing. But look what I found! These are pakui berries, known to cure the poison of the white jade plant.

That, or makaola berries that cause blindness.

– *Avatar the Last Airbender* #2.2

pressed down ignites tinder at the bottom like a combustion engine. *Flint* can be gathered nearly anywhere and creates sparks by being struck with steel or iron. *Magnifying glasses*, *mirrors*, or other parabolic reflectors can concentrate light from the sun to spark a flame.

Method	Skill Modifier	Minimum Average Time*
Fire Piston	-1	30 seconds (1d-1x10 seconds)
Firebow	-1	2 minutes (1d×30 seconds)
Flint and Steel	-0	30 seconds (1d-1x10 seconds)
Friction Block	-2	3 minutes (1d-1x10 minutes)
Hand Drill	-2	3 minutes (1d-1x10 minutes)
High-Tech Methods†	+/TL	10 seconds (3d seconds)
Magnifying Glass, Mirror	-0	2 minutes (1d×30 seconds)
Pump Drill	-1	1 minute (1d×15 seconds)

* Use the parenthetical value for random start times per fire.

† Use this for lighters, blackpowder weapons shot into kindle, etc.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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RANDOM THOUGHT TABLE

THE AFTERMATH PROTOCOL

BY STEVEN MARSH, *PYRAMID* EDITOR

Having recently joined the cutting edge of 2006 by getting a PlayStation 3, I've been playing a lot of *Dragon Age: Origins*. One of the things I most appreciate about BioWare's approach to this game is its willingness to present the heroes with difficult questions for which there isn't a cut-and-dried answer, and the outcomes of which aren't trivial to calculate. I also liked that many decisions seemed like Big Deals – perhaps of even global importance – but still maintained an intimate feel for the player.

Of course, most RPG gamers do that sort of thing all the time (myself included!). However, it's sometimes challenging to include those types of dilemmas in a forum that's intended for myriad audiences.

Here, then, is a humble suggestion for such a scenario. It's presented in broad terms, because everyone's *GURPS After the End* campaign is likely to be different.

former army outpost, or battle robots with some kind of relation to a military.

Shortly afterward, the heroes are approached by a stranger, who tries to charm and infiltrate the party. He's weaponless and dressed unassumingly, and does his best to convince the PCs that he means them no harm (which is true). Assuming the heroes aren't heavily of the "shoot first" mindset, the stranger – named Brother Cristoff (birth name of Cristoff Salizar) – then gently inquires if the PCs uncovered any information about the Aftermath Protocol. Assuming they say no (which they truthfully can), he persists with vague but related questions a bit more, though he ultimately drops the subject. If the heroes demonstrated any investigative acumen during his time with them – or of they seem particularly receptive to Brother Cristoff – he then asks the heroes if they wish to join the Church of the Coming Aftermath.

THE END

The page references below refer to *GURPS After the End 2: The New World*. These are minimum requirements; specific campaigns could have additional elements.

Primary Cause: The reasons behind the end were relatively known; there should have been a nuclear element (although it need not have been a primary reason for the world's collapse).

Secondary Effects: *Bombs Away!* (p. 4); *Things Fall Apart* (pp. 6-7).

Tech Level: 8 (with elements of 9-10).

When: Depends on the Aftermath Protocol delay; set the campaign a few years before it will go off (e.g., if the Protocol has a 50-year delay, the end was 47-49 years ago).

Appropriate Hazards: Radiation (p. 25).

The Church of the Coming Aftermath

The Church was established within the past 50 years (or more, depending on how long ago the end was). Members of the Church believe a contingency plan related to the catalyst that ended the world had been established. This plan would allow a new world to be reborn from the chrysalis of the post-apocalyptic world. They speak of the wisdom of the "Progenitors" in sowing the seeds for the world's salvation amid the rocky, radioactive soil of the fallow planet.

Depending on how much the heroes know about the specifics of the end, they may be able to correlate what the Church believes to what they already understand. Although the specifics depend on the campaign, the Church speaks in relatively obvious metaphor: If the United States and Russia engaged in a nuclear conflict, then they may tell tales of the Eagle clashing with the Bear with endless fire; if a food blight caused society to collapse, then they may talk of the Great Hunger that devoured the world, etc.

THE FIRST BREADCRUMB

The heroes resolve an adventure with a light military connection (which takes place before this one). Perhaps they uncover a cache of military weapons, search for supplies in a

(The Church itself is relatively uninterested in specifics – they consider the past to pale in comparison to the future – but will not dissuade the heroes from making connections if they like.)

The Church also use vague terms to relate how the Progenitors had a contingency plan that would allow the world to be reborn. The Church honestly doesn't *have* any more info – and what little they have is impossible to draw specifics from. (For example, if the Church understands the clash of the Eagle and the Bear brought about the end of the world, then they may believe that the Eagle had lain one last egg before the world's end.) The time is soon – perhaps within the next year or three – for the rebirth. The Church believes that this will happen with or without humanity's intervention. Many members are currently attempting to track down the "Focus" – the source from which the rebirth will occur – because they have a spiritual interest. However, they don't believe they have to do anything once they find it. Other members spread the stories about the contingency plan and the hope for a new age of peace.

It's up to the heroes what they do with this information. It's a vague enough matter (Problem? Opportunity?) that they can't do much explicitly, but they *can* investigate and search for more clues.

If the heroes don't get involved with the Church, that's fine. Perhaps they encounter more Church members as the year(s) until the rebirthing event happen. Maybe associates of the adventurers have other stories that they've heard from their own interactions with a Church member.

THE WANDER YEARS

This sense of Something Big about to happen should serve as the backdrop for about one to three campaign years. It won't (usually) appear as a primary adventure; rather, its something interesting to tuck into the background. As the time draws near, the Church grows increasingly active, gaining converts as the culmination of the promise that the world will be reborn anew comes closer.

During this time, the Church can serve as a fairly powerful Ally or Patron. They have considerable resources, and are not averse to most activities that heroes might want to participate in. They are, in general, a good organization, and the adventurers should feel (not incorrectly) that their members' hearts are in the right place. If the heroes have proven themselves to be more-or-less heroic and occasionally helpful to its cause, the Church is happy to keep tabs on them, perhaps even saving the day if the adventurers are in over their heads. (Church doctrine is not averse to killing or destruction, if it serves the larger good.)

Eventually, the heroes should discover – in vague terms – that the Church seems to be correct. Adventurers learn (through records, scavenged computers, or the like) of the Aftermath Protocol, which does seem to be something that would "reboot" the world in the event that the worst happened. This Protocol is, indeed, designed to automatically execute after a dramatically appropriate amount of time (50 years, 100 years, 200 years, or whatever suits the campaign) . . . and that time is almost here.

This outside confirmation should affirm (or reaffirm) that the Church is on to something, and perhaps the heroes to redouble their efforts to find out more.

How this campaign framework proceeds is up to the GM, but the wastelanders should continue to find more and more information that gets them closer and closer to the Aftermath Protocol initiation point. Perhaps they discover intel that provides the degrees – but not the minutes – for a latitude and longitude point (which narrows the search to up to a 70-square-mile area). Maybe they find key cards that they know will be of some use to gain access. The breadcrumbs should be based on the players' interests and inclinations, interwoven with other adventures that fulfill their characters' primary goals.

HERETICAL IDEAS

As the heroes get closer to finding the origin source of the Aftermath Protocol, they encounter representatives of another group, which calls themselves the Last Hope. The Last Hope is a much smaller group than the Church (about 20 or so members); they are more an affiliation of like-minded explorers. They are completely secular and no-nonsense (similar to many PC groups, only larger). They have done their own research on the Aftermath Protocol, and have found evidence that – if it's allowed to come to fruition – will bring about the end of humanity. They are looking for recruits to help track it down with the sole purpose of stopping it, and will court the heroes for their help. They can provide their own aid as Allies, but – obviously – they find themselves at odds with the Church (although both groups are still respectful). The Last Hope is as zealous – in their secular way – as the Church at trying to spread their message, but the Church's message of hope amid the wasteland has proven *much* more popular.

*The end of the world is only
the beginning . . .*

ENDGAME

The seeds are thus sown for conflict, and how they sprout is up to the GM and the players. Two groups are seeking the same thing (the Last Hope more than the Church, because the Church believes that the Aftermath Protocol will activate with or without involvement). One group believes the Protocol will save the world; the other thinks it will end it.

Ultimately, the heroes gain access to the Aftermath Protocol vault. They may be on their own, or with one (or both!) groups in tow. This should be as tense as the GM can manage. Ideally, the clock is ticking down with hours to spare. If the heroes managed to keep their destination secret from one or both groups, perhaps other seekers figured out how to track down the PCs.

THE SECRET OF THE PROTOCOL

The military vault is as interesting as the heroes would appreciate, perhaps with killer sentinel robots, automated traps, etc. This should all be high tech that's at the limits of what the heroes have encountered (although cutting edge for the pre-fall society).

Ultimately, the heroes discover what the Aftermath Protocol is and what it's designed to do. The Progenitors (whoever they are) correctly realized that – with the fall of civilization – radiation would be a huge problem for the world to rebuild from. Thus, they created massive nanite tank repositories, designed to pump the tiny robots automatically into the atmosphere after a period of time (that is, now) when they could be reasonably assured the initial threat of the end times would be over. The nanobots are designed so that they make anyone infected with them immune to future exposure to radiation; the nanobots process all radiation as its hosts come in contact with, causing the radiation to be excreted harmlessly.

Unfortunately, this process has drawbacks. Anyone who has been exposed to the nanobots will have a lifespan no greater than about 45-50 years; the human body just isn't meant to host a radiation-mitigation system indefinitely. The nanobots are also very efficient at reproducing; if they're released in any form, it seems all-but-certain they will infect the earth. (It's not possible to selectively inoculate humanity; it's an all-or-nothing proposition.)

In **GURPS** terms, everyone receives Regeneration (Fast; Radiation Only, -60%) [20] and Short Lifespan 1 [-10].

Thus, with the clock ticking down, the heroes' two most obvious options are:

- *Do nothing (or release the nanobots early).* People become immune to radiation, but anyone over the age of 50 rapidly passes away, and humanity's longevity – and ability to pass down information – is greatly curtailed.

- *Halt the launch.* This is the status quo. Humanity still has problems with radiation, but at least they're not risking the world's future.

Regardless of which the heroes choose, both sides – the Church and the Last Hope – are entrenched in their mindsets. And, really, they are both correct; rendering humanity

immune to radiation *would* be a great boon to rebuilding the planet (as the Church believes), and it *would* spell the end of humanity as we know it (as the Last Hope believes). In this way – unless the heroes are remarkably persuasive – both sides will do everything in their power to bring about their goals.

DENOUEMENT

The ultimate decision for how this resolves is up to the heroes. The GM should try to ensure there are no easy answers, but temptations on both sides. If the heroes opt to not launch the nanobots, perhaps they can figure out how to save a capsule of them for later study (with the implicit risks that their continued existence poses). If the heroes are leaning toward launching the nanobots, perhaps some preliminary investigation shows that it might be possible to deactivate them sometime down the road (although not within a generation or two). It's up to the GM if a self-destruct option is possible for the military compound. Obviously, if the heroes aren't tempted to launch the nanobots, then that provides the most permanent resolution to the dilemma . . . which may be good or bad, depending on how much the GM likes making them squirm. Otherwise, the only option might be to seal up the facility securely, do what they can to keep it secret, and hope future generations don't get similarly curious.

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.

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SHORT BURSTS

GOOD OLD DAYS

BY MATT RIGGSBY

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* * *

As Raj sped under the checkered flag, a plastic beer bottle bounced off the vid slab. A thin, foamy splash tinted the image yellow but quickly ran off the no-friction surface, leaving it clear in seconds. Toches Tibo's was a duelist bar, and it was just another dive stuffed into an industrial concrete bunker (reinforced against hurricanes like everything else in what was left of Louisiana), but the owners put a lot of money into their video equipment.

"Damn Ramirez," Dominica shouted at the screen. "I had money on Mel."

Her friend signaled the bartender for another beer. "Don't know why you follow these kids anyway. Hasn't been a great driver since Carson and the Vancouver gang."

"Vancouver?" Dominica snorted. "All hardware. Peltz coulda taken them. Hell, I'd give pointy-ears even odds one-on-one." She jerked her head at the dueling coverage, showing a Ramirez profile. The latest generation of exquisitely engineered fox ears, protruding elegantly from his mop-top haircut, twitched toward the interviewer.

"Vancouver gang's all hardware, and rich boy there's any better?"

Dominica shook her head ruefully. "Not like they used to be, Rikki. That Atlanta stadium?" She rapped her knuckles on the plastic arm she'd thrown the beer with. "Got this clearing out road pirates not 50 miles away when I was that age. Saw someone competing with an octopus tentacle the other day. A *tentacle*, and she got it because it was cool or something. If we'd known we'd be clearing the roads for an octopus, we'd have let the bikers win. I'll stick with recharging this every night."

Rikki nodded sympathetically. "Tentacles, horns, snake skins. If those mutants were better drivers, they wouldn't get hit enough to need the replacements."

"Wannabe vid stars," Dominica grumbled. "All fancy clothes and chicken dinners." She turned to the bar. "Tibo, change the channel, will ya? I know you got those good west-of-Houston feeds when the censors aren't around."

The slab flashed into smoke and flame. The view resolved into a stabilizing aerial shot: rocky gray hills to one side, a dried-out gray plain to the other, and in the middle a cracked blacktop with a sedan rolling over and over, clipping a compact as it went. A crawl at the bottom identified drone footage from Furnace Creek. A pair of trikes split around the rolling sedan and chased after a trio of pickups, firing rockets before peeling off.

"Now *that*," Rikki observed, "is like the old days."

About the Author

Matt Riggsby has written over 120 articles and supplements for Steve Jackson Games.



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