The Responsibility of Great Power

Variable Power Pools in Champions

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Variable Power Pools are a wonderful modifier added to ***3rd edition Champions*** in the ***Champions III*** supplement. They are now part of the rules in ***4th edition Champions,*** and while somewhat improved, there are those that feel they are either unbalancing, unworkable, not powerful enough, or just plain confusing. This article contains some (hopefully) helpful advice, suggestions, and comments on using Variable Power Pools in your ***Champions*** campaign.

Control Cost Based on Active Points

The cost to have a variable power pool is contained in the control cost, which is dependent upon the amount of points in your power pool. The rules state that the control cost is equal to 1 point for every 2 points in the pool. That's fine. If you have a 50 point pool, you have to pay 25 points for the control cost, making the total cost for the pool 75 points.

But suppose you want to limit the maximum active points of any power in the pool to 30 points. The suggestion that I make is that the control cost be equal to half of the maximum allowed active point value of any power in the pool. So in this example, the control cost would only be 15 points, for a total pool cost of 65 points.

Pool-Specific Advantages

The list of advantages and limitations in the rules are fine and cover most situations adequately. Some people have commented that allowing characters to have the 0-phase action advantage gives them too much power. I have to disagree.

In my last campaign, one of the characters had a good-sized pool (60 points), but had to take a full phase to change it around. If you change your powers regularly, which isn't uncommon in a combat with changing opponents, attacks which don't work, needing an increase in defense, and so on, you can reduce even a Speed 6 character to effectively Speed 3, and that's assuming he makes the roll to shift the points in the pool. The player of that character pointed out that he often did very little in combat, and I had to agree.

The following assumes the character has the skill to change the pool around in combat.

A new advantage I propose is one which allows the character to change the power(s) in his power pool in only half a phase. It has a value of +3/4. This is still limiting in that any kind of combat maneuver will prevent him from changing the contents of his pool, and he may not always be able to use the new power (unless it is a defensive power) in that phase of combat, but he will still be useful enough not to feel like he's just taking up space.

For those campaigns that don't feel variable power pools are a problem, or have a problem with having to take a whole

phase to change powers, make it a house rule that changes only take 1/2 a phase to complete. To balance this out, you may want to change the modifier on the skill roll to -1 per 5 active points in the power.

Another advantage is to allow the pool to be changed during the post Phase 12 recovery. This is a +1/2 advantage and does not eliminate the normal recovery process.

The Skill Roll

A lot of characters like to change their powers in combat, and buying the skill is the only way to do that without buying the appropriate advantage.

As was mentioned above for changing the time to alter one's pool from 1 phase to 1/2 a phase, the idea of changing the modifier on the skill from -1 per 10 points to -1 per 5 points may sound good to you by itself. I know I considered it myself.

Another idea is to change the cost of the skill from 3 to 5 points due to the powerful nature of the skill, I did this in my campaign without causing any major difficulties.

Since a roll is required when changing the power(s) in the pool, there are two options one can take on what the points for the modification should be. This question comes to mind when modifying rather than changing a power, such as making an EB more powerful or changing the advantage on a power.

For example, you have a 6d6 EB in your pool, but you want too bump it up to 10d6. This is a 20 point change, with the new power being worth 50 active points. Since it is technically a different power, you could rule that all 50 points be used for the roll modifier, or that since the power (EB) is still the same and only the effect value is changed, that the change in points (20) be the only thing affecting the skill roll. Similarly for adding any advantage to a power.

Cosmic Power Pools

In the examples section of the *4th edition* rules it says:

"Cosmic Power Pool: This is a Power Pool that can be whatever the character wants, whenever the character wants. Total Advantage on the Control Cost is +2."

This is the same description written in ***Champions III.*** Some of the confusion about cosmic power pools is whether or not the special effect can be anything at all. That depends on your interpretation.

Remember that the variable power pool still needs a guiding special effect. This doesn't necessarily mean that all of your powers have to be fire-based or whatever, but the "theme" of your character should be preserved. So if you're a weather-controller, psionic, or probability manipulator, the effects of the pool should fit the character concept.

The rules for power pools say that all the powers in the pool have the same special effect. Therefore the above cosmic pool example would really be a power pool with 0-phase and no skill roll required, totaling a +2 advantage.

But, if you want to take the wording literally, then the pool would have to be bought with the advantage Variable Special Effects, to truly be able to do everything. Therefore the advantage for cosmic pools would be +2 1/4 or +2 1/2.

Powers With Charges

If having charges is within the special effect of the pool and your GM allows the power in the first place, you must

realize that the power will be unusable for the rest of the day (or adventure) after all the charges are expended. There are various approaches one may want to take regarding the option (no one said you had to allow it) of having powers with charges.

1. After the charges are used up, the real cost of the power is deducted from the reserve available in the pool and cannot be used to make other powers until the time when charges can normally be recovered (usually after a day) or when the power pool can be modified (i.e., back at the lab after an hour's work). The exact limit is up to the GM. You may decide this option is actually a limitation on the power pool.

2. Once the points for the power are allocated, they remain allocated until all the charges are used up. Thus the pool is limited in size until the power ceases to be useful or it no longer works. So if you use up your entire point reserve on a power with charges, it's the only power you can have until you use it up, and of course you can't create the power again.

Balancing Suggestion

In campaigns where variable power pools seem to be having an effect on game balance, try out some of these suggestions and see if things improve.

1. Set the limit on the active points for any power in a power pool below that of other powers. For example, if your campaign has 50 active point limit on powers, powers in power pools may only go as high as 40 active points. Whether or not the suggestion made earlier in this article for modifying control costs applies with this limitation is up to the GM.

2. As a general rule, don't allow characteristics bought in a power pool to add to figured characteristics.

3. See if what the character wants can be done better with a multi-power or elemental control. Though in some cases a variable power pool may be more efficient. I had a character that I'd been playing for 4 or 5 years in another game and my GM and I realized that a variable power pool was the only way to make him not cost 600 points while having the same level of power he had before.

Helpful Hints

Always write down a set of common and/or useful powers that can be put into your pool. Include all the advantages and limitations and their values as well as active and real costs so you can have easy access to them and not have to do any point-crunching during the game. You may also want to list common combinations of powers you use as well.

Don't fool around with your power pool on the fly unless you know the system very well. Even then, it may not be a good idea. I've been playing the game for years and it still takes me time to work up some stuff.

Make sure that the characters with power pools can't or don't outshine other characters in their own ability unless they both happen to share the same specialty or the power pool character's ability comes from outside his pool. In smaller groups this generally isn't a problem as it's easier to be unique, but in groups with 8 or more characters a character with a power pool can start stepping on people's toes.

On this note, I heard of an interesting limitation which can help prevent this problem. Its value varies by how good the character's senses are and by how many powers are used. The limitation is that the character can only use powers which he can't perceive being used, or just those his opponent isn't using. Therefore, if there are a lot of EBs, RKAs, and Force Fields in use, the PC will have to get creative and maybe even think a little (shock and horror).

Try to avoid the "I create the power I need" syndrome. Playing a character that can do everything will only get on the other players' nerves, if not the GM's. I can speak from personal experience on this one. Playing a character that has limits can be fun and enjoyable and often helps to give the character direction and a niche in the campaign.

Points to Remember

The only powers allowed in variable power pools are: adjustment, mental, movement, size, and standard powers. Special powers cannot be put into a power pool without the GM's permission. Thus you can't have characters who can perceive everything (VPP-enhanced senses), be everything (VPP-multiform) or be good at everything (VPP-skills). Although some special powers may not be as abusive as others, like mental and flash defense, the rule is good as it stands.

When the points are no longer allocated to a power, the power is gone. Even continuous and permanent powers stop working when you no longer allocate the points for them.

Variable power pool has a stop sign next to it in the power heading. The GM doesn't even have to allow it into the campaign (I believe Rob Bell mentioned that he didn't allow it in one of his). And like all the listings with stop signs, they should be considered carefully before being allowed into the campaign.

Conclusion

All in all, a variable power pool is not a game-ruining device, any more than a well-designed elemental control or multi-power is. It just requires the same attention, if not more. Think carefully before you allow power pools in your campaign, and always give them a second look anyway, just to make sure the GM and player see eye-to-eye on what the pool's aim and purpose is.

An Introduction to Providence

by Danny Budge

"Our lives are filled with enough negative images; when did gaming stop becoming escapism and start becoming an affirmation of our worst qualities? When did we stop becoming heroes? I welcome you to Providence, a place where you are the hero, in a world where you can make a difference." -- Lucien Soulban, creator of the ***World of Providence.***

We created ***Providence*** with the intent of providing an alternative to the current trend in gaming. What drives us, as gamers, to enter the fascinating universe of roleplaying, is the yearning to engage in a world of fantasy and fiction. It is the desire to be more than passive participants in a world filled with entertainment which only allows us to observe. What inspires us, as roleplayers, to delve deeper into a fantastic universe, is the ability to influence the events of that world.

Unfortunately, as we all know, that is not always possible. The doom and gloom that has possessed many games of late often does not allow for that kind of interaction with their worlds. Events often spiral out of control without our characters having much influence over the outcome. A sense of hopelessness seems to have taken over where hope used to thrive. Perhaps this is due, in part, to the impending arrival of the next millennium. The inability to control our lives in a world that is increasingly dictated to us is a popular theme in many games. We at XID Creative feel that there is also a great need to return to the primal ideal that drove the gaming industry forward in the first place -- the ability to make a difference.

This ideal is the catalyst that led to the birth of the *Creative System* for ***Providence.*** This system makes use of rules that are easy to understand. Players and Game Masters can make use of the basic rules alone, or they can integrate optional rules. The advantage of playing with or without the optional rules all depends on the type of game you are trying to run. If gamers want to achieve the maximum level of realism, they can make use of the optional rules which provide increasing layers of detail. Conversely, gamers that wish to have a quicker game, which focuses more on interaction rather than die rolling, can easily ignore the optional rules without any detrimental effect on game-play. Once both players and GMs alike become familiar with their characters, the world, and the *Creative System*, integrating the optional rules into the playing experience is easy.

A Bit About the World of Providence

The world you are about to enter is one filled with many wondrous creatures and fantastic landscapes. The importance your characters will have in the future and well-being of this world will be paramount. You will become the heroes of Providence, and your actions will be recounted in legendary tales. Are you ready for the challenge?

Countless generations ago, your ancestors fought in a war to end the tyranny and oppression of an unjust social system on the planet of Yas'Wail. They were champions who believed in equality for all and they demanded reform. Despite their great spirit and courage, the Yas'Walian rulers defeated the rebels and freedom fighters in a bloody war that lasted for five years. This defeat quashed your ancestors' dream for freedom. In punishment, the oppressive leaders exiled the rebels into a world far away, where they would live out the rest of their lives in slavery.

The Incarceration

The rebels found themselves imprisoned on Providence, a hostile and thriving world. To escape the dangers of this enclosed realm, the Wardens who were in charge of operating the prison camps built fortresses and encampments isolated from each other to maintain a rigid control over the prisoners. For 400 years after the exile, the Wardens

succeeded in keeping the rebels in chains. However, the Wardens quickly realized the prison world had also become their tomb. Like the exiles, they had no way of returning home. For many Wardens, the reasons for keeping the prisoners in dungeons slowly became insignificant. If they were exiles along with the rebels, some believed their best chances for survival lay in cooperation with the prisoners.

The Liberation

Feeling betrayed by the Yas'Walian rulers, many Wardens decided the best way to ensure their survival was through collaboration with their prisoners. They achieved this by freeing the rebels. The first colony to free their charges was the Cry-Star camp. Another camp called Cliff-Spider soon followed. Despite the liberation of these two sites, not all Wardens were willing to emancipate their slaves. One compound remained determined to carry out the task set out for them on Yas'Wail; that camp was Bone-Wail. It remains a prison colony to this day.

The Current Years

The liberation of millions of prisoners has not erased all the injustices of society. Providence, like your ancestors' home world, is a place replete with discrimination. Your appearance determines your standing in society. A rigid caste system is in place to keep certain members of society from attaining positions of authority, while it ensures that those who possess functional wings receive all the privileges life has to offer. In addition to the conflicts generated by these inequalities and increasing threats of war, Providence is experiencing a series of ecological disasters that some attribute to your presence in this land. It has become increasingly apparent that you must find a way out of this world. Amidst this chaos, you are the world's salvation. Without your intervention, your brothers and sisters threaten to annihilate each other while the planet slowly engulfs everyone in torrents of water and flashes of flame.

The Factions

Numerous lines divide the world of ***Providence.*** Racial, social and ideological classifications all contribute to the partitioning of your home.

The Alliance of Kings

The Alliance of Kings is an amalgamation of liberated prison camps that have come together to face the dangers of the world. They include Cry-Star and Cliff-Spider, the two largest cities in the Alliance. The Alliance's chief opponents are the Wardens, led by Bone-Wail. The liberated cities stand against Bone-Wail's insistence on maintaining harsh prison camps that continue to afflict the prisoners with daily atrocities. Ironically, the Alliance itself is not without controversy. Despite emancipation, the society you live in is hardly just and equal. The Alliance enthusiastically and stringently supports a caste system that discriminates based on appearance. This caste strata segregates those with fully functional wings as the Pure -- the elite of society -- and those without wings to the strata known as the Fallen, society's scapegoats. This inequity is dividing the Alliance of Kings. The ideological schism not only creates a rift in your cities, but it also prevents other cities from joining the Alliance of Kings.

The Wardens and Bone-Wail

Bone-Wail remains a Warden-run city; an oppressive and ancient symbol, and a reminder of the evils of the past. It is the largest city in Providence, built in a forest of petrified trees. Warden Elarian, a powerful Dragon and a member of the oldest ruling family in all of Providence, controls the city with an iron-clad fist. Bone-Wail enforces its rule over its depraved slaves by using mutated creatures to intimidate them, and to keep them in chains. The guards who operate the prison on a day-to-day basis are former prisoners who have chosen a lifetime of servitude to the Wardens. The Wardens force them to go through a painful process that leaves them near-mindless drones, dedicating their entire life's purpose to serving their new masters. Bone-Wail's agenda is rather simple: its purpose is to rule. The Wardens wish to stay in power and enslave all opponents who stand in their way. Although Bone-Wail is by far the most potent symbol of Warden control, Green-Deep is also a warden-run outpost.

The Lost Tribes

Prior to the arrival of your ancestors on Providence, unbeknownst to the Wardens or their charges, inhabitants already called the world their home. Only after years of living on Providence were they discovered. Presently, most of these tribes are hostile to your presence. They blame you for the current ecological disasters that plague their world. While you have learned to adapt yourself to this world, you still acknowledge that your home world lies somewhere beyond Providence. The Lost Tribes, on the other hand, have completely integrated into the flow of life and call Providence their own. There are four groups that comprise the Lost Tribes. The first and arguably the most dangerous are the Green People. They are a race of people who have developed a symbiosis with the plant life of Providence. Although the full extent of their abilities are unknown, you are aware that they have a deep affinity with plants and may even be able to communicate with them. They make use of trees, creepers and vines in their arsenal of warfare. The second race is the White Crow. Ancient and powerful descendants of a lost race of Yas'Walians, the White Crow are perhaps the most aggressive of all the Lost Tribes. Although they are mysterious opponents, their purpose is clear: the annihilation of your people from the face of Providence. The Serpenkine are the third Lost Tribe. As their name implies, the Serpenkine are a race of powerful individuals who share the characteristics of lizards. They make persistent opponents because of their sheer strength and endurance. Fortunately, not all Serpenkine wish to eliminate you. One faction wishes to integrate you into the realm of Providence while a second faction is an ally of the Green People in their effort to destroy you. The last and least aggressive of the Lost Tribes are the Swarm Dancers. They are a race of insect-like creatures who share a common link with each other. Until now, they have been receptive to your overtures for friendship, and may even be counted on as allies in the upcoming conflict with other factions. Their mind, however, is the most alien of all the Lost Tribes and few pretend to fully understand the Swarm Dancers' motives or goals.

The Inhabitants

Many divisive markers sever the world of Providence. Race is one of these factors. If you are fortunate enough to have wings, then there are two categories that are easily identifiable. They are the Seraph and the Iblii. The Seraph possess wings of feathers while the Iblii have leathery wings of skin. Whichever you belong to makes no difference in terms of caste standing. Although there are more Seraph, possessing feathers is by no means an indication of greater social status. Both are equal.

The Troupials

What are Troupials? Simply, a Troupial is a classification that distinguishes someone based on physical appearance. Essentially, a Troupial is another word for race. Each Troupial has unique features and abilities not usually shared by other groups. Here is a sampling of your kindred:

Troupial Bat

Members of Troupial Bat are generally shorter than individuals of other Troupials. Both males and females stand between 4'8" and 5'5" and weigh between 100 and 120 lbs. Members of Troupial Bat do not have wings. They possess only gliders. These are membranes of skin stretching from the wrists to the waist which enable them to glide. The hue of their skin tends to be dark brown, gray or black, and they have short body hair that serves as a sensory organ to perceive variances in air current. The span of their glider membranes is larger than the other Troupials with gliders, which enables them to perform great aerial maneuvers. Bats also have highly developed hearing due to their ability to emit sound waves which allows them to perceive objects using sonar. This allows them to direct themselves extremely efficiently, even in darkness. At the same time they have impaired sight, particularly at longer ranges. All these unique

attributes contribute to the Bats feeling isolated from the other Troupials. For this reason, they tend to be cautious around members of others. Bats only feel comfortable around their own kind, or members of Troupial Rat and Troupial Dragon, their two sibling Troupials.

Troupial Dove

Doves tend to be strong and sturdy individuals. The males are generally compact, measuring between 5'0" and 5'5" tall, and weighing between 150 and 180 lbs. Females are usually between 4'9" and 5'4" tall and weigh between 120 to 160 lbs. Members of Troupial Dove have white to light blue tones along their backs, faces and legs. Their arms and torso tend to be darker in color, ranging from blue to purple tones. Patches of black appear along their necks, forearms and along the wings or glider membranes. Of all the Troupials, Doves are, without question, the most socially active people. They love the company of others and are generous with their time and information. Because they are gregarious, Doves are often members of various organizations simultaneously, which means that they have many different friends and contacts. Doves also make excellent explorers because they are proficient flyers and the best navigators in Providence. Since they are social, Doves tend to get along with all other Troupials, and have no prejudice towards a particular group.

Troupial Dragon

In the game of court politics, few have the sharp skills of Dragons. They are one of Providence's three Iblii Troupials, possessing leathery wings rather than feathers. Male Dragons stand roughly 5'6" to 6'0" and weigh 175 to 220 lbs, while female Dragons stand 5'4" to 5'9" and weigh between 135 and 190 lbs. Dragons also possess a three-foot-long tail covered with serrated scales. While Dragons tend to be poor flyers, they compensate for this deficiency by using their tails as deadly weapons in combat. The skin coloring of a Dragon is either red or green. They often braid their silver-white hair. Dragons view long braids as a sign of authority; they often settle differences in a ritual contest known as a Mane Duel. In this engagement, both combatants attempt to cut off each other's braid. Dragons are also interesting because they are the winged siblings of Rats and Bats. Dragons and Rats born with glider membranes will always become Bats. A Bat or Dragon born with no flight appendages always becomes a Rat. Likewise, Rats or Bats born with full wings become Dragons. While the three Troupials are vastly different from each other, they share a common lineage.

Troupial Eagle

Eagles represent the pinnacle of racial esthetics in Providence. They are highly athletic and males measure between 5'9" and 6'4" and weigh between 190 to 220 lbs, while females stand between 5'7" and 6'3" tall and weigh between 155 to 220 lbs. The Eagles' coloring is a golden brown along their wings or glider membranes, faces, hands, forearms and backs. A darker shade of brown runs along their upper arms, torso and legs. Eagles have a very large frame that supports strong wings or glider membranes. For this reason, Eagles are some of the most powerful and agile flyers in Providence. In flight, they are perhaps the most effective warriors in the world. In addition, Eagles have excellent vision enabling them to spot their prey at very long ranges. Generally, Eagles are confident, and perhaps even at times, boastful about their abilities and their station in life. They are regal and take their place in society very seriously. Unfortunately, this means that many of them believe in the caste system and feel that certain members of society are inferior by default. This limits their tolerance for others, and their ability to function well with other Troupials, depending on their personal experience.

Troupial Gargoyle

Members of Troupial Gargoyle are by far the strongest and the most physically imposing of all the Troupials. Males and females are massive and measure anywhere from 6'5" to 8'0" tall and weigh an impressive 300 to 500 lbs on the average. Their body color is based on the primary elements. For fire, the skin tone is red, for water it is aqua, for earth it is brown, and for air it is white. In addition to these colors, Gargoyles have

markings that represent the various elemental forces. For example, fire Gargoyles will have jagged stripes along their bodies while earthen Gargoyles will have cracks and layers like earth. Despite their massive frames and their bulk, Gargoyles who possess wings or gliders are still able to fly or glide. Nevertheless, they are nowhere near as fast or agile as other flyers and gliders. Their awkward flight or manner does not seem to bother Gargoyles in the least. They are very much aware that they are the most physically imposing people in Providence and they do not pretend to be anything more or less than what they are. This frankness and honesty unsettles many of the other Troupials who consider them barbaric. To Gargoyles, other groups spend too much time talking and not enough doing. For this reason it can be difficult for Gargoyles to integrate into other groups.

Troupial Jackal

Jackals are the quintessential bastards of Providence. They are a mixed breed of people and are usually unwanted and rejected by their parents, unless of course their parents are also Jackals. Members of Troupial Jackal are Fallen, having no ability to fly, and they possess a combination of attributes from many other Troupials. For this reason, they tend not to have many common features. However, because many reject these Fallen children at birth, most do not survive very long. Many people even kill Fallen children at birth. Those that do survive tend to be individuals who are remarkably strong and resistant. This can make them formidable opponents considering that a Jackal can simultaneously possess characteristics from Troupial Gargoyle and Troupial Eagle. As a means of providing a Troupial identity, Jackals make use of a permanent dark purple berry-dye around the eyes and hands of all those willing to call themselves Jackals. Jackals are painfully aware of the caste system and their position at the bottom. Unlike other Troupials however, they are unwilling to submit to it. Because of the stigma attached to members of society without wings, and because they tend to aggressively challenge society's racism, most other Troupials tend to shy away from associating with Jackals. The rejection many Jackals have experienced has also made them suspicious of others adding to their difficulty interacting with many Troupials.

Troupial Rat

Rats are shorter than any other Troupial. Males are 4'0" to 4'8" tall and weigh a meager 75 to 100 lbs. Females are shorter on average by one or two inches. Like Jackals, Rats do not possess wings or even glider membranes. This does not bother the adroit Rats who more than make up for their lack of wings with their agility, speed and acute senses. Although Rats are not physically imposing or an asset in a drawn out battle, they use their minute size to their advantage. They make the most effective spies and thieves. Another advantage that the Rats possess is that most other Troupials underestimate their potential, meaning they often benefit from an element of surprise. Enhancing this advantage is their acute hearing and sense of smell, in addition to their ability to detect heat patterns in darkness. Although not as social as Doves, Rats generally enjoy the presence of people. Regardless of Troupial, Rats are usually easy to talk to and they get along well with most people.

Troupial Raven

Ravens are, by far, the most mysterious of all the Troupials in Providence. Known as the keepers of secrets, many people call upon Ravens to act as sages and advisors. Ravens are generally lean, weighing an average of 145 lbs for males, and an average of 130 lbs for females. Males usually stand at 5'6" to 5'10" tall and females are between 5'3" and 5'9" tall. Unlike other Troupials, Ravens do not have differing hues; they are a uniform deep indigo black.

Although most Troupials reject their children born without wings, Ravens accept their Fallen as equals. It is their belief that each individual has something important to offer to the group as a whole. Generally, because they are born into an environment that actively promotes academia, Ravens are purview to a great deal of valuable information at an early age. Due to this, many people feel ill at ease around Ravens, particularly if they have deep secrets they would rather remain hidden.

What Is Your Function in this Society?

Now that you have seen a sampling of the members of your world, you will need to decide your role in this complex society. A number of options are available to you depending on your caste status and your abilities; assuming that you have any powers of course. Generally, there are three types of inhabitants in Providence. The first, known as Shards, possess fantastic abilities conferred at birth, that manifest at some pivotal point in life. You may also have the ability to manipulate similar powers, but have learned your craft through teachings. Taught by a sage to cast spells, you manipulate the magical forces of Wird to generate fantastic effects. Lastly, and not to be underestimated, you may be without abilities; someone who relies on perfectly honed skills and characteristics to survive. Here are examples of the various character roles available to you:

People's Knights

The quintessential heroes of Providence, People's Knights are willing to sacrifice themselves for the betterment of society. Whether they are wingless or noble, these valiant people have dedicated their lives to a righteous cause. They defend the weak and speak for the helpless. Despite society's views, People's Knights perform their duties without regard for the higher castes' disdain. No other duty is greater than that of protecting the innocent. Although this might be highly idealistic, in Providence, there is a need for heroes such as these. Generally, People's Knights oppose the caste system. They tend to fight against society's oppression of those less fortunate because the caste system discriminates so blindly. These heroes have earned the ire of the nobility while often reaching the status of heroes and legends on the streets where they operate. Because of their nature, People's Knights can make numerous enemies in their lifetimes. For this reason, most prefer to remain anonymous. To conceal their identity, many of them wear masks and take on a heroic alias. In addition, to build a reputation, the Knights also wear individualistic costumes adding to their prestige and mystique.

The Guilds

Rulers created various guilds to appease and control the growing number of individuals born as Shards. These Guilds offer Shards the ability to rise in the caste system regardless of the rank of their birth. The possession or lack of wings does not, in any way, impact the ability of Shards to enter the guilds. Only an individual's abilities and drive will determine how far a person can go. Perhaps the most notable and respected of all the guilds is the Guild of Drummers. Only those who possess superb strength and constitution are stern enough to join. People who have the ability to project powerful energies make up the Guild of Archers. Both peon and royal alike regard the Guild of Archers very highly. For their part, the Guild of Cartographers are the explorers of Providence. Without their efforts, the rulers would never have been able to venture far into the unknown realms of Providence.

There are many, many more character roles available to you. You could choose to answer the calling of the D'Shau Monks, an ancient order who maintains the worship of the ancient gods. You can become an Anodyne -- a person dedicated to the good health of all of Providence's inhabitants. Through the teachings of alchemy and herbalism you heal Fallen and Pure alike. You could also become a fearsome Kestrel -- a warrior dedicated to perfecting your body and honing your skills to crystal-sharp accuracy. Whatever your choice, these options reflect the diverse nature of Providence's society. Essentially, only your imagination limits your function.

Now that you have taken a glimpse at the fantastic world of ***Providence,*** you can create your character. Are you a noble member of society born into privilege and riches, or are you an outcast who has fought for everything you have obtained? Will you defend the status quo, or fight the flagrant injustices of the world. It is up to you to decide. Remember, whatever you do, you will determine the outcome of your future, and that of your world. Choose wisely.

Reptiles and Riflemen

Harry Turtledove's *Worldwar* Series in *GURPS*

by Eric Oppen
Art by Dan Smith

March 1942 -- the world wages war. Axis forces press forward in North Africa, Russia and the Far East. Britain's counterattacks are reduced to flying bombing raids into German-occupied Europe. The United States still reels from Pearl Harbor.

And then, the aliens from the stars invade -- and things get *really* bad.

The well-received *Worldwar* series, by Harry Turtledove, is based on the premise of an alien invasion of Earth, arriving in March 1942. The aliens -- 5-foot-tall reptilesque bipeds with chameleon-like eyes and stubby tails -- are dubbed "Lizards" by humanity; their own name for themselves translates as "the Race." They call humans "Tosevites" when they're being polite, and "Big Uglies" when they're not. They consider most of Earth to be cold and wet.

Eight hundred years before the invasion, more or less, the Race sent an automated interstellar probe to Earth, to find out whether or not the planet was worth invading. Based on that data, the Race thought they had an easy conquest; no race they knew about had changed much in such a short time. Unfortunately for them, their experience gave no precedent for the massive changes in technology and culture that humans underwent after about 1500. Instead of overawing the primitives with their advanced weapons, the Lizards found themselves faced with a foe not far behind themselves, and in the fight of their lives.

Lizard technology can be described as late TL7 in military applications, up to TL8 in many others. They have fusion generators, STL starships, cold-sleep and a few other TL8 devices, but military technology is almost all at TL 7, roughly equivalent to 1990s state of the art. This is partly due to the slow rate of change in their society, and partly to the fact that they have not had to fight a war in a very long time. Lizard society changes only very slowly; new technology is carefully assessed before being released, to prevent sudden change.

Not only are the Lizards fighting for themselves, but their people. Twenty years after their invasion, a large fleet of colonization ships will arrive, expecting to find a properly subjugated world to settle upon. To say the least, finding themselves in the midst of the sort of fight currently under way will not go over well.

The Worldwar Campaign

The invasion, coming as it did during the middle of World War II, was badly timed from both points of view. Had the Lizards come even 50 years earlier, their conquest would have been much easier. At the same time, even in the face of alien invasion and occupation, humanity found it very difficult to change focus from fighting each other to fighting the aliens.

Both sides have advantages and disadvantages in the war. The Lizards' trump is their high technology; even the most advanced tanks available in 1942 are outclassed hopelessly against Lizard "Landcruisers," and in the air

things are even more lopsided -- envision Spitfires and Messerschmitts challenging F-16s. Another edge for the Lizards is that humans were fighting among themselves when they arrived. This allowed them to look for allies among humanity, with some success. The Jews of Nazi-occupied Europe and the inhabitants of Japanese-occupied China both have taken the Lizards' arrival as an opportunity of the lesser-of-two-evils variety.

The humans aren't helpless. Unlike any Lizards, many of them have real-life combat experience as the encounter begins. This counts for a great deal; Lizard tanks fall into traps set by the Germans that wouldn't fool the Russians for a second. Also, the speed of innovation among humans increases even above wartime norms under the pressure of the invasion. Weapons that in our time line were not developed, or never entered production, are used as stopgaps against the Lizards, and some human ideas such as poison gas are completely new to them. In ***GURPS*** terms, the Lizards find themselves fighting a race with many Gadgeteers (p. CI25), who devote themselves to military matters.

Home turf also plays a large role, especially given the Lizard's discomfort. The peoples that give the Lizards the most trouble live mostly in areas the Lizards find uncomfortably cool, at best; winter anywhere in the temperate zone is hellishly cold by Lizard standards. Many human counteroffensives have succeeded when planned to take advantage of blizzards.

Paradoxically, the Lizards' high technology works against them and in favor of humanity in some ways. The Lizards did not expect anything like the resistance they found, and they have no way to replace lost weapons, while human factories continue to churn out new things. Attempts to use human-built factories in the areas they control have had, at best, indifferent success.

One very large difference between the *Worldwar* timeline and our own is that areas untouched by our World War II are heavily hit here. In particular, North America is heavily affected. With Washington, D.C., destroyed, large areas of the Midwest and Southwest under occupation, and ferocious battles raging elsewhere, things on the home front aren't nearly as good as they were in our timeline. Food is scarce in many places, tobacco almost nonexistent except where it is grown, transportation severely disrupted, and so on.

This allows the GM to set up a *Worldwar* campaign in familiar territory. It is perfectly possible to use one's own home area as the setting, with a little research into what was there in 1942, and some thought about how the Lizard invasion may have changed things.

One of the main themes of the series is the necessity for cooperation among former enemies against the Lizards. This offers some good role-playing, whether between Germans and Russians, Americans and Japanese, or (on a smaller scale) Hungarians and Romanians. Distrust and suspicion of the old enemy should always be there, underneath whatever surface cooperation may have been achieved.

In fact, there is no hard-and-fast law in a *Worldwar* campaign that characters need to be from the area where the campaign takes place. In the books, an American ends up in China, Englishmen command the combined German-Russian defenses of a Russian city, and multinational scientists work together in the laboratories of the United States. If a player wants a character with an oddball background, this should be perfectly plausible.

Possible player-character types include:

Bandits -- One effect of the breakdown in civilization caused by the invasions is an upsurge in banditry. Bandits would be unlikely to try robbing Lizard convoys, but stray humans trying to get out of the way of the fighting might offer tempting targets.

Civilians -- Many non-military members get involved in the fight against the Lizards. These include resistance righters in occupied areas, specialists needed to facilitate a mission's success and many others.

Collaborators -- Many people in the books work with the Lizards for various reasons. Even in the United States, some will sell out their country and people. The reasons for doing this could be as varied as the characters themselves; some, such as the Jews in Eastern Europe, act from perfectly comprehensible motives, while others do so for personal gain or revenge.

Prisoners -- The Lizards take many humans prisoner, particularly in the early days of the invasion, when they seem all-conquering and invincible. Their prison camps are as big as towns, and in some cases *are* towns, in areas where geography makes it easier to keep them there.

Smugglers -- Even in wartime, trade and business go on. Smugglers could be people living in an area with access to both Lizard- and human-held territories, or ex-soldiers who've been separated from their units and find themselves in a new job. Between bringing ginger into the Lizard-held areas, arranging deals with corruptible Lizards, and bringing out Lizard equipment, tobacco, or anything else that'll sell, smugglers could have many adventures.

Soldiers -- This could be called the default *Worldwar* campaign. A group of hardbitten combat types, armed with whatever is at hand, uniformed poorly if at all, and fighting against technology greater than anything they've ever seen; this is very close to many future-war and alien-invasion scenarios. Soldiers do not have to be from the big, well-known armies; one interesting variant I've thought of involves a group of people from the minor Axis powers (Italy, Romania, Hungary and Bulgaria) who were interned when the U.S. got into the war and freed to fight the Lizards.

Spies -- The need for information on what's going on in Lizard-held areas is intense and ongoing. A group of people who're willing to get into a horse and buggy and infiltrate through a thinly held area of the front, snoop around on some pretext or another, and report back somehow, could have a very interesting time. Of course, nobody guarantees that you'll make it back or even live, especially given the obvious difficulties with disguises . . .

Scenarios

We've Got To Get Out Of This Place

In this scenario, a group of the Lizards' prisoners are trying to get out of their prison camp. One way to do this could be: have each character write up a 1942-era character, and then tell them: "After the Lizards landed, you ran into each other in a prison camp at . . ." and take it from there.

Force Ten from Schenectady

The Lizards have set up a munitions factory for themselves in the nearby occupied zone. Unlike a lot of their plants, this one is working out. What's needed here is a group of people who don't mind penetrating enemy-held territory in a do-or-die attempt to take out a heavily guarded, vital facility. Any volunteers?

The Collaborators

The PCs are on the Lizards' side. They could be anybody; Jews convinced that the Lizards are a better bet than the Nazis, Russians who've been praying that anybody at all save them from Stalin, or American blacks. By no means is this an immoral decision for members of those groups, given their perspective of human society. But don't be surprised if the players decide to have their characters see the error of their ways during the course of the campaign.

Smugglers' Blues

The PCs are members of a smuggling ring. They've been in business for a while now, in a quiet way . . . a little ginger to the Lizards, in return for small pieces of their equipment, tobacco, or gold and silver taken from captured banks and jewelry stores. Nobody gets hurt; everybody benefits. However, this time, it's different. Maybe the PCs got in the way of a major Lizard witch-hunt for ginger-tasters, and now they've got the Lizards' own security people on their trail. Or, this time they're specifically after a piece of alien technology that Earth's scientists need. It's make-or-break time.

For the Glory of the Emperor!

This can provide an interesting change of pace -- the PCs are all Lizards, working to bring Tosev 3 under the beneficent rule of the Emperor.

Spies Are Us???

You've been chosen for a special job! No more dreary combat or factory drudgery for you -- instead, you're given a farm wagon, a couple of horses, some small cameras and film, a couple of shotguns in case of bandits, and a radio set, and then sent through the thinly held areas in the north into Lizard territory! Have fun! Oh, and do remember not to stay on the air too long while transmitting -- the Lizards have this distressing habit of tracing human transmissions and blowing the transmitters up.

Useful books for a Worldwar campaign include:

GURPS Cliffhangers (for background material on society, as well as possible campaign ideas)

GURPS Espionage (especially if the campaign focuses on spying)

GURPS High-Tech (for data on weaponry and related matters)

GURPS Vehicles (for stats on tanks, aircraft, etc.)

Of course, a GM wishing to set up a *Worldwar* campaign should read the novels themselves (available from Del Rey) as well as some general references on World War II. Particularly in a campaign set in the United States, there are references available that show what daily life was like back then, and show the differences between then and now. To set the mood, the GM could find and play some typical music from the 1940s; Glenn Miller, swing and Big Band would be good choices as well as ways to remind the players that this is *not* the 1990s. Or, if you're playing Germans or in Germany, try "Lili Marlene."

By Ed Wisniowski
Art by Fredd Gorham

Cloning is a popular theme in science-fiction roleplaying, but it can make life miserable for the GM. Metaphysical, mechanical and common-sense questions arise in an unending stream once the duplication of human beings becomes available technology in a campaign. This article addresses the major issues, and how to keep them under control.

The Easy Out

A campaign's tech level defines what type of cloning PCs can access. At low tech levels, only magical options are open -- and the inventive GM can create a host of eerie side effects or repercussions to limit availability and usefulness. The first time a PC has to fight his double for possession of their one-and-only soul will make a lasting impression on every player.

Societies with current technology -- ***GURPS'*** TL7 -- *may* be able to clone small mammals, but humans would be an expensive, iffy and state-of-the-art proposition. PCs can be denied access to cloning outright.

At higher tech levels, cloning becomes reliable and cheap, at least in the ***GURPS*** system. GMs should feel free to modify both factors -- Well, your clone developed with the right number of fingers and toes; problem is they're on the wrong limbs. Looks like you'll have to sell another Space Megaliner to pay for another try." -- especially if he wants to promote bionics in his campaign.

The State of Copying Uncle Art

Once cloning becomes available, its technical advancement should be determined.

Currently, medical technology can't support a fetus outside of the body, so anyone able to make clones in a TL 7 campaign may need surrogates to carry the children to term and/or raise them. For an interesting portrayal of low-tech cloning, read *The Boys from Brazil* or rent the movie adaptation.

At higher tech levels, a clone can be grown to full maturity in a clinic, but its brain will remain a clean slate at TL 8. The clone will need training and development before it enters society. The development of braintaping at TL 9 allows memories to be transferred directly into the clone's mind, producing a nearly exact copy of its source. At TL 10, braintaping technology capable of implanting person A's identity into a clone of person B may be available.

GURPS assumes all clones undergo forced aging, measured in weeks. This need not be assumed; the aging technology may elude scientists until a later tech level than cloning's debut. Or perhaps clones can be force-aged, but the process can't be *stopped*, limiting their life span to months. If clones must grow at normal speeds, many of the advantages (and temptations) of commissioning one will be erased.

After determining how advanced cloning is in a campaign, other questions related to the technology need be answered: Does the technology require special, expensive clinics, or can any hospital afford cloning facilities? Can clones be made of clones? Are clones that identical to an adult source? (Most genres consider this a staple of cloning, but the GM can decree that childhood environmental factors help shape a person's physique and can't be duplicated. Thus

clones resemble but don't mirror their source.)

Splicing Them In

Once the technical parameters become defined, society's reaction to cloning needs to be determined. This often proves the most fascinating aspect of the job.

Fundamentalist societies might ban the technology as evil or unnatural. Clones may even be beaten in the streets by mobs, as living examples of the Devil's work. Liberal cultures will struggle with human-rights issues for these new people, while questions on voting and citizenship come up immediately in a democratic society. Liberal forces would, by doctrine, be the most likely to champion clones' rights -- but conservatives would be more likely to afford clones with which to flood the polls! Regardless, *some* faction or several of them will argue clones have fewer human rights than naturally born humans, all the way down to all the personal liberties bestowed upon other laboratory products such as bathroom cleanser . . .

If clones receive voting rights, both conservative and liberal forces will court the "clone vote" (among those clones not created specifically *to* vote) as a way to improve their situations politically. Interesting concessions may result.

Dictatorial nations might use clones to remake their nations. People with desirable racial characteristics may be cloned to replace people removed in purges. Entire job categories could be filled with "identical" clones, which would seem like a good idea to some dictators, till all their soldiers rebelled simultaneously!

Some societal impact will be outside human control. A major technological advance creates a ripple effect, such as when the assembly line helped create the Luddite movement in England, the automobile helped create suburbs and the computer decimated the number of clerks needed in modern business. Artificial human beings likely will reshape things even more radically -- often in unforeseen ways.

Ownership of genetic information will substantially define cloning. Today, most people own their own genetic material and no one else has any right to it. Contrary to popular conspiracy theories, the government can only use genetic information to identify a person; people don't have to turn over genetic information except in criminal or paternity trials (though insurance companies already are working on changing things . . .). This right may remain intact, or governments may claim the right to clone their most talented citizens. In a cyberpunk setting, corps may claim the same right of their employees. If *no one* owns genetic rights, then anyone may be surprised to bump into himself on the street. Celebrities may find hundreds of copies of themselves being created to serve as prostitutes (but note that at cloning-capable tech levels, cosmetic surgery can mimic celebrities closely enough to suit many purposes such as this without cloning).

Beyond genetic ownership, who can legally order up a clone? Many societies will restrict cloning's access. Those that don't still must determine whether a clone can clone itself, if the technology permits. Many societies will find it reasonable to limit the number of clones a person can make.

One of the least plausible staples of cloning in ***GURPS*** is the "clone organ bank," where a blank-minded clone is maintained as a source of spare parts, or a spare body. Most liberal democratic societies would outlaw this, weighing minimal human rights more heavily than the convenience of roleplayers . . .

Containing Clones

The simplest way to keep cloning from getting out of hand -- yet retain its potential as a plot device -- is to restrict access. Perhaps PCs have to win an expensive court battle to get a license to commission a clone. Most campaigns should retain genetic-ownership rights, leading to the potential for mammoth court fights over copyright infringements and the occasional unwary person selling their right and finding the streets flooded with copies of himself! Legal restrictions work particularly well because they allow abuse by filthy rich, influential NPCs. ("The chairman of the board wants me to train all 7,200 of his clones in what!?!")

Human rights are trickier. Realistically, any society that bestows citizenship rights likely will grant the full works. (Would *you* discriminate against someone just because they didn't grow up in a human womb? Besides, if the technology is available, some non-clones will gestate in clinics where a mother's health would be at risk.) Social Stigmas, on the other hand, likely will endure the best efforts of public relations. Even in enlightened societies, many will resent and/or fear clones for taking up jobs, being more talented on average and for being *unnatural*

. GMs may want to design a package of social disadvantages for every clone in his campaign. Better yet would be two packages, one for clones in liberal democracies and one for clones in more repressive societies. Any other disadvantages shared by clones -- such as Short Lifespan or Unnatural Feature -- could be included as well.

An important non-background question the GM must answer is the one that prompted clones' roleplaying popularity in the first place: can players who get their character killed take up where they left off with a clone copy? Generous GMs may allow it; others can rightfully argue that a clone no more represents the character than would a twin. Disallowing clone-hopping will curb abuse.

Ultimately, the campaign setting for cloning should leave room for conflict -- between clones and the rest of society, between different visions of where cloning should head, and between clones and their originals themselves! To do otherwise sharply reduces cloning's potential as a dramatic device.

Plot Ideas

Someone -- preferably one of the PCs' enemies -- has gained access to the party's genetic information and cloned them with orders to hunt down and extinguish the original party!

A PC with a clone has just bought himself an expensive advantage with his hard-earned experience points. The clone demands the same advantage, and the GM graciously offers to let the character use his next umpteen points to pay for it! (This one's a lot like parenting . . .)

Donors -- the Media Kind

For an example of how players can find themselves struggling with everyday life when an exact copy is walking the streets, see the film *Multiplicity.*

Any campaign with clones can establish a trademark for them. Frank Herbert in his book *The Jesus Incident,* had all clones take the middle name Lon. Other signs you are dealing with a clone may be a lack of a belly button (though a pseudoclone's navel becomes an important plot device in Robert Heinlein's *Friday*), or a prominent tattoo making it clear this person came from the lab and not the womb.

A popular theme in B-movies and books is to allow clones to communicate telepathically with each other. This *should* cost points.

A Very Nybbas Christmas

An *In Nomine* Scenario

by Alain H. Dawson
Art by Dan Smith

"Oh come, all ye faithful, to the HUGE Christmas in July SALE going on RIGHT NOW at BLUMENFIELD'S!!! Hark! I hear prices dropping! Spread peace and joy all year 'round. Why wait for December? Start buying now! Nothing shows how much you care like a present from Blumenfield's! Away in a manger? Order from our catalog! Operators are waiting for your call!!"

Beneath reflections of Santas dancing on his glasses, Nybbas smiled. "Oh yeah. Now this has potential."

The Demon Prince of the Media has a great idea. Why not complete the secularization of Christmas in one fell swoop? Get stores to start decorating for Christmas before Halloween; hell, before Labor Day, and suck the last drops of religious meaning from Christ's birthday. Promote getting above giving. Selfishness and guilt everywhere! And put the last nail in St. Nicholas' coffin by making his namesake a pitchman. That even beats having Fred Astaire sell vacuum cleaners from the grave.

Now for some good P.R.

The Ad Men

Nybbas doesn't want to entrust his brain child to amateurs, so he calls in some heavy hitters to organize his campaign. Of course, any of his servants will be told to cooperate with the plan, which he is launching nationwide in the United States.

He wants to use the Blumenfield's chain as a starting place for the Christmas in July media blitz, then use their success to pressure other stores into following suit. He then plans to continue his media Christmas until he has destroyed the sanctity of the holiday. Jezreel is all set to give Blumenfield's the full Madison Avenue treatment, and Rex is along to ensure that every segment of society laps it up.

Jezreel

Balseraph Knight of the Media

Corporeal Forces -- 2 Strength 3 Agility 5
Ethereal Forces -- 4 Intelligence 10 Precision 6
Celestial Forces -- 4 Will 8 Perception 8
Vessel: Human/3 (Charisma +1)
Role: Advertising Executive/4, Status/4
Skills: Artistry (Graphic Art/6), Computer Operation/3, Drive/2, Fast-Talk/6, Knowledge (Advertising/6), Savoir-Faire/4
Songs: Charm (Celestial/4), Motion (Celestial/5), Thunder (Corporeal/3), Tongues (Corporeal/6, Ethereal/4, Celestial/3)
Attunements: Balseraph of the Media, Knight of Influence,

Subliminal

Jezreel (known in her Role as Jessica Meyers) is a highly successful advertising executive working for the firm of Brown & Samuels, one of the hottest ad agencies in New York. Not only could she sell a refrigerator to an Eskimo, she could get him to pay extra for an ice dispenser. She currently enjoys great favor with Nybbas and she wants to keep it that way.

He has asked her to get the Blumenfield's account and clean it up. Less tacky hard-sell, more palatable and marketable. She'll have to steal it from one of her competitors, but she's got no problem with that. She plans to go to the Blumenfield's execs and pitch her ideas until they sign on with her. From that point it's in the bag. Christmas practically sells itself.

In person Jezreel likes to go for the severe, board room look. She loves the trappings of success and always has on the best of everything, but never to tacky excess. She goes for $150 haircuts and $150,000 automobiles. She can easily afford both.

Rex

Demon of Cool

Balseraph Baron of the Media

Corporeal Forces -- 6 Strength 12 Agility 12
Ethereal Forces -- 3 Intelligence 6 Precision 6
Celestial Forces -- 6 Will 12 Perception 12
Vessel: Human/5 (Charisma +5)
Skills: Dodge/3, Driving/5, Fighting/5, Knowledge (What's Currently Cool/6), Savoir-Faire/6, Seduction/6
Songs: Attraction (Ethereal/6), Charm (Corporeal/5, Ethereal/4, Celestial/5), Form (Celestial/6), Light (Corporeal/6)
Attunements: Balseraph of the Media, Baron of the Fourth Estate, Balseraph of Lust, Balseraph of Dark Humor, Dark Desire, Soundtrack, Subliminal, the Demon of Cool
Special Rites: Rex gains 1 Essence every time he starts a trend

Rex is simply the embodiment of all that is cool. He always seems to be doing, wearing, or smoking the latest thing, just before everyone else discovers it. He makes James Bond look like a bum.

Just as visual media gave birth to the image of cool, the Prince of the Media gave life to the Demon of Cool, and Nybbas is a very proud parent. Not surprisingly, Rex's Word goes hand in hand with his father's. Cool would be nowhere without the media, but the media would have far less influence without the attraction of being hip.

Rex can get people to emulate any sort of behavior just by connecting it to his Word. He wields peer pressure on an international scale. He enjoys seeing what extreme or unhealthy act he can persuade humanity to undertake just because it has his stamp of approval on it. Smoking, drinking to excess, one night stands, stealing; Rex has successfully promoted all of these activities as cool.

Kobal gets along with him extremely well. After all, Kobal thrives on laughter at others' expense, and Rex makes everyone around him look ridiculous by comparison. Sometimes Kobal will dare him to popularize some hare-brained idea that no human in his right mind would try. Decorative branding is the result of the latest bet between them. Kobal paid up by giving Rex the Balseraph of Dark Humor attunement.

However, Rex's favorite Prince (aside from his father, of course) is Andrealphus. They enjoy being around each other almost as much as they enjoy being around themselves. Over the years, Rex has done as much to promote the Word of Lust as his own Word, considering them to be inseparable. Andrealphus has rewarded him with several attunements, and in other ways which neither of them will discuss.

Rex's personality and appearance are as changeable as fashion. One minute he's brooding around in a leather jacket, the next he's raving in a polyester shirt and tattoos. He learned the Corporeal Song of Light for the sole purpose of keeping himself in the spotlight, and the Celestial Song of Form so that he could change his body type as easily as he changes his clothes.

Whenever Nybbas wants Rex to perform a specific task, he teams him up with a very organized Servitor, such as Jezreel. Nybbas is aware of the necessity for both great ideas and detailed planning, the latter not being Rex's strong suit. He has the attention span of a teenager on ecstasy.

His attunement allows him to create cool, that is, to make people think that whatever he is doing or saying is cool. In person, he can affect ten people for each point of Essence he spends, making them believe that one thing he has said or done is cool. However, the real power of this attunement works through visual media. When he is seen on screen, on TV or in a photograph, his attunement affects ten thousand people per point of Essence spent. Either in the flesh or seen through a lens, his victims may make a Will roll to resist him. Celestials add their Celestial Forces to the roll.

Blumenfield's

Blumenfield's started out in the late 1800's as a department store in New York run by immigrants from Germany. Sales from their popular catalogues helped them expand into other cities, and their growth exploded in the 50's as parents bought more and more for their baby boom children. Blumenfield's has stores in more than half the States in America, but they are currently undergoing a financial crisis which leaves them vulnerable to takeover bids by other conglomerates.

The Blumenfield's executives were a little overwhelmed by Jezreel's onslaught, but they quickly realized that she would make them a great deal of money with her skill and ideas. Not being stupid, they have thrown the weight of their approval behind the Christmas campaign.

Les Caldwell

Blumenfield's CEO

Corporeal Forces -- 1 Strength 2 Agility 2
Ethereal Forces -- 2 Intelligence 6 Precision 2
Celestial Forces -- 2 Will 4 Perception 4
Status: 5, Toughness +2
Skills: Computer Operations/2, Drive/3, Detect Lies/4, Fast-Talk/2, Knowledge (Business Operations/4)

Les Caldwell is a tough, savvy businessman who's skills haven't been quite enough to halt Blumenfield's slow decline. He is originally from Brooklyn, a local kid making good by getting through Harvard, and then an M.B.A. from the University of Chicago. After a few noteworthy successes in bailing out companies with problems, he decided to take on the task of restoring Blumenfield's to its former glory.

The shareholders were glad to see him, but in the three years he has been at the company's helm, he has still not managed to produce a complete turnaround in its fortune. He regards Jessica and her ad campaign as promising for the company, however he is reserving judgment until solid proof arrives of her plan's effectiveness.

Natalia Pejovic

Blumenfield's Sales Associate

Corporeal Forces -- 2 Strength 3 Agility 5
Ethereal Forces -- 2 Intelligence 4 Precision 4
Celestial Forces -- 1 Will 2 Perception 2
Status: 2, Toughness +1
Skills: Fast-Talk/1, Knowledge (Fashion/4), Languages (Serbo-Croatian/3, Italian/2, French/2), Savoir-Faire/3

Natalia is a 23-year-old sales associate who has worked for Blumenfield's for a year. In keeping with her line of work, she is outgoing and talkative, not to mention extremely good looking. She thinks that the Christmas in July theme is rather tasteless, but she won't complain about making more commissions if the advertisements work.

She is an average member of the Blumenfield's sales force, although slightly more cosmopolitan than the norm. The GM can have her working in any city where the players are operating.

Scrooge

Nybbas isn't the only Prince of Hell who thinks year 'round Christmas is a good idea. Malphas is delighted with the concept. What better way to drive a wedge between Christianity and all the other religions? Act as though Christmas is the only religious holiday that Americans want to celebrate, ram it down everyone's throats regardless of their beliefs, encourage non-Christian children to beg their parents for Christmas presents, then sit back and watch the fun. This could make Yugoslavia look like a schoolyard scuffle.

Malphas has assigned his Servitors to support Nybbas' campaign any way they can. First, they should encourage Blumenfield's competitors to fight back with their own Christmas campaigns, and secondly, they should stir up resentment amongst non-Christian faiths. There's nothing that servants of Factions do so well as setting groups against each other.

Unbeknownst to Nybbas, Malphas has sent one Servitor to Earth in order to spread a rumor that the angels are behind this Christmas nonsense. Some demons are bound to believe it and try to stop Nybbas' plan, but hell, they don't call Malphas the Prince of Factions for nothing.

Hazael

Impudite Servitor of Factions

Corporeal Forces -- 3 Strength 4 Agility 8
Ethereal Forces -- 3 Intelligence 5 Precision 7
Celestial Forces -- 3 Will 6 Perception 6
Vessel: Human/3
Role: Journalist/3 (Status/5)
Skills: Computer Operation/4, Dodge/2, Escape/2, Fast-Talk/3, Literacy/4, Lying/3, Move Silently/2
Songs: Attraction (Ethereal/3), Motion (Corporeal/3), Possession (Celestial/2)
Attunements: Impudite of Factions, Imbroglio

Hazael is a smooth operator. He is very skilled at leading people down the path he chooses for them, convincing them at every turn that it is their own idea. Creating a war of niceness between retail conglomerates is just the sort of big job he has been dying to oversee. If he does his job well, he might even get a distinction out of it.

In preparation for his current assignment, he watched *A Miracle on 34th Street* over 100 times. His favorite moment is when the competing department stores become outwardly altruistic in order to make more money. Not being a very original thinker, he plans to use the same tactics to get other chains besides Blumenfield's into the Christmas spirit.

He has assumed the Role of a well known columnist, and he will use the national forum of newspapers to trumpet the joy and goodwill of Blumenfield's, "as they keep the spirit of Christmas alive all through the year." Traveling around the country, he will interview the management of other large chains, asking for their response to Blumenfield's

campaign and trying to goad them into defending themselves in the media.

Jehozabad

Shedite Knight of Deception

Corporeal Forces -- 4 Strength 10 Agility 6
Ethereal Forces -- 3 Intelligence 6 Precision 6
Celestial Forces -- 3 Will 8 Perception 4
Skills: Dodge/4, Emote/3, Fast-Talk/2, Move Silently/6
Songs: Entropy (Ethereal/3, Celestial/1), Possession (Celestial/4), Shields (Corporeal/5)
Attunements: Shedite of Factions, Knight of Factions, Imbroglio, Polarize

Shedim are generators of chaos and Jehozabad is no exception. It sows dissent wherever it goes, including Hell. Demons are not safe from its machinations any more than humans or angels. It hates everybody.

Malphas has charged Jehozabad with spreading rumors, creating a false trail to connect the early Christmas season with angelic interference. It is not on Earth to promote a particular outcome but to create suspicion and, ultimately, conflict. It would be perfectly willing to point out a demon to an angel simply to start a fight between them, thus lending credence to its murmurs of an angelic plot. It has even been known to possess weak and inexperienced angels (by using the Song of Possession) and get them into loads of trouble with friends and enemies alike.

Once set into motion, Jehozabad will continue to widen any distance between two groups and inflame any tensions it can discover until Malphas recalls it. The only way to stop it is to deprive it of a host, expose its lies, or get it in trouble with the Prince of Factions. Even then, it may return to continue its work. Like a bad check, Jehozabad keeps coming back.

The More the Merrier

Andrealphus is not all that turned on by Nybbas' plan, but he definitely likes media exposure, and Rex has also requested that Nybbas work with the Prince of Lust to spice up his campaign. "It's summer, so people want to think about being cold. And what do you want to do when it's cold? Have sex! I'm telling you dad . . . *ouch!* . . . I mean, Sir."

Andre has agreed to lend some of his Servitors for the purpose of making Christmas sexy. The Lilim do look cute in those fur bikinis . . .

Lola

Lilim Servitor of Lust

Corporeal Forces -- 3 Strength 3 Agility 9
Ethereal Forces -- 5 Intelligence 9 Precision 11
Celestial Forces -- 2 Will 3 Perception 5
Vessel: Human/3 (Charisma +2)
Role: TV Personality level/4, Status/6
Skills: Emote/5, Move Silently/3, Savoir-Faire/4, Seduction/5
Songs: Attraction (Ethereal/4, Celestial/2), Charm (Corporeal/2, Ethereal/3, Celestial/4), Numinous Corpus (Fangs/2)
Artifact: A ruby pendant which grants her Seduction/6
Attunements: Lilim of Lust, Dark Desire
Discord: A level/5 Geas owed to Andrealphus

Lola is an average Lilim in most ways, (turn ons: red hair, control; turn offs: angels, losing) but she has more than her

fair share of street smarts. Her brightest move lately has been to shack up with Rex. Not only is he a big shot in Hell, he's killer handsome and in favor with her Prince. She can't lose. Now if she could just get a Geas on him, things would be perfect.

She is Rex's ulterior motive for including Andrealphus in the Christmas plan, and she's thrilled to be along for the ride. Her bombshell looks and long red hair are going to be a main focus of the TV and print ad campaign, along with Rex and his sex appeal. Like any demon, particularly a Lilim, she loves to be the center of attention.

Andrealphus himself gave her the ruby pendant she wears in exchange for her Geas. He encouraged her to use the artifact on Rex so that he would become attached to her, thus giving Andrealphus a hold over a high ranking demon in Nybbas' organization. The Prince of Lust would also like to see her get a Geas on Rex, which is why he sent her for this particular assignment.

Greed is Good

Hazael has a buddy who just happens to work for Mammon, and he's asked her to join in the fun. Mammon himself has given her his approval to run amok. She wants to use the festivities to promote credit card debt, shoplifting, squabbling over Beanie Babies; in short, greed. 'Tis the season to dip into your kids' college fund and get a second mortgage.

Tabitha

Habbalite Knight of Greed

Corporeal Forces -- 3 Strength 5 Agility 7
Ethereal Forces -- 4 Intelligence 8 Precision 8
Celestial Forces -- 4 Will 10 Perception 6
Vessel: Human/2
Skills: Computer Operation/4, Drive/2, Emote/6, Fast-Talk/6, Knowledge (Contract Law/5), Lying/4
Songs: Charm (Celestial/3), Form (Celestial/3), Projection (Corporeal/4), Thunder (Corporeal/2)
Attunements: Habbalite of Greed, Knight of Treasure, Art of the Deal, Only the Best

Tabitha considers it her life's work to teach people a lesson about greed. In her opinion, the only way to renounce greed honestly is to embrace it and lose everything. She works tirelessly trying to sink people into debt, and nothing pleases her more than an eviction or a broken marriage caused by her efforts. Even a homeless person panhandling on a street corner raises her ire. The only way to escape her influence is to be broke and happy to stay that way. In her eyes, that is a blessed state.

In person, Tabitha exudes a quiet aura of dedication and (in loftier moments), piety. This serves her well, since her usual method of taking her victims' money is through promoting bogus charities. She is quite adept at mail fraud and especially proud of herself when she bankrupts senior citizens, leaving their children a legacy of debt.

She is going to do her darndest to ensure that people spend money like water during the extended Christmas season. Her goal is to make people's normal January financial hangover look like chump change.

Faith, Hope and Charity

In order to achieve her goal, Tabitha will use her own tried and true method: bleed the suckers dry through a very worthwhile (and fake) charity.

She has set up the Have-a-Heart Foundation, a charity which claims to help disadvantaged people, build hospitals, distribute

toys to homeless children and food to homeless families, airlift drugs and farming tools to third-world nations and anything else that Tabitha could dream up. Usually she works on a small scale, but Hazael has been writing glowing tributes to Have-a-Heart in his column. He also put her in touch with Jezreel who immediately saw the potential of Have-a-Heart and launched it with its own national campaign.

The ads pull at people's heartstrings and purse strings by trumpeting a few very splashy good deeds which Tabitha actually engineered. Plus, every time people give, they get a chance to win $100,000. It's the Publishers Clearinghouse of charities. The money thus raised is used to bribe government investigators to give Have-a-Heart a clean bill of health. Any inspectors who hold out are coerced in a less friendly way by the slew of demons and Soldiers working to support Christmas in July.

Right Now

The rest of the money goes to setting up a new credit card company called Right Now, Incorporated. Unlike Have-a-Heart, the Right Now card is real, but with such a (literally) diabolical contract that it siphons away money while it promotes more spending. The higher the balance, the lower the interest payment, but the card holder must charge up the balance each month in order to get low interest for that month. Deep in the fine print Tabitha has buried penalties for prompt payment, a zero balance, or canceling an account. It's the perfect card for people who are into instant gratification. It also offers ten percent off at any store which has joined in the Christmas in July campaign.

And They're Off!

Jezreel and the Public Relations Machine

As the main organizer of this plot, Jezreel will be directing Rex and Lola as well as selling both of Tabitha's going concerns. Her files at Brown & Samuels have almost every detail of the campaign, including the planned duration. Jezreel has solid outlines for July and August, and projections that extend into the next year. Her records will look innocuous to any casual observer, but just in case, she keeps them locked in her office at Brown & Samuels.

She will be present at most of the commercial shoots for Blumenfield's and promotional appearances by Rex and Lola. She will also be consulting with Tabitha at the offices of Have-a-Heart and Right Now, Incorporated.

Jehozabad

The Shedite will by busy planting rumors that Nybbas' campaign is an angelic hoax. It may blow the PCs' cover to an angel just to make its story sound good. If it comes upon any demonstrators religious groups that are against Christmas in July it will try to create a mob mentality and goad the crowd into violent confrontation. It doesn't care who it sets against who, just that it leaves fighting in its wake.

Hazael

He will be running around the country, firing off columns from his laptop. His writing will eulogize the early Christmas movement and all stores which support it, while accusing its detractors of being selfish and un-American. He will also plug Have-a-Heart, giving the address where to send donations in every column.

The Man

Nybbas is being very hands-on with this campaign. He will occasionally show up at Brown & Samuels to talk with Jezreel, where he will be distinguishable by his bad suit and his glasses, which seem to reflect TV screens at all times. He may appear briefly at random promotional events to monitor the audience's interest level. "It's all in the demographics, baby!"

The Players

The demon player-characters have an opportunity to cause major havoc by backing Nybbas' idea. How many people would go postal if they heard *Jingle Bells* every day for six months? The general opinion amongst the Princes is that at the very least, this will irritate the Host, and at best it might cause the bloodiest religious war in history. Servitors of Nybbas and Malphas will be in on the plan from the beginning; others may join in as they discover what's happening. Even Asmodeus approves, mostly because it will keep Earthside demons busy and out of mischief (the wrong kind of mischief, that is).

The real problem for demons will be putting up with all of the good cheer. Fake or not, tidings of comfort and joy make greed more palatable for humans, but the diabolicals (except for the Balseraphs) will have to grit their teeth and avoid television if they want to stay sane. How many demons would go postal if they heard *Joy to the World* every day for six months?

Christmas in July

Jezreel has carefully orchestrated all of the elements of the campaign to launch at precisely the right time. She has commercials aimed at the entire demographic spread, TV shows, appearances, tree-lighting ceremonies, books, talk show bookings; anything a good Servitor of the Media can think up.

Except for the first one on the fourth of July, the tree-lighting ceremonies may take place anywhere the GM decides to put them, although Jezreel would never schedule one in some one-horse town. They should be held in an urban setting.

July 1st: Commercials aimed at adults begin airing, starring Rex and Lola. Simultaneously, Jezreel has arranged reruns of all the classic children's holiday specials, one a day for the next month, interspersed with commercials promoting Have-a-Heart and the Right Now card.

July 4th: Rex, Lola and Jezreel will be on hand for the first tree-lighting ceremony outside of the Blumenfield's in Los Angeles. They will light 100 palm trees with red, white and blue lights, then set off fireworks and sign autographs. Nybbas will drop by to admire his work.

July 8th: An original cartoon series, created especially to sell Christmas in July and lots of toys, will premier. Blumenfield's commercials with tie-ins to the cartoon will also premier. "The Miracle of Christmas in July" articles start running in the tabloids.

July 11th & 12th: Tree-lighting ceremonies

July 17th: Scheduled debut of a pop-theological book called *365 Days of Christmas*. It is schmaltzy drivel about feeling the spirit of Christmas every day, with not one genuine sentiment in the whole book. If not blocked or discredited, it will immediately go on the bestseller list.

July 18th & 19th: Tree-lighting ceremonies

July 20th-24th: Jezreel plans to shoot more commercials in New York and Florida.

July 25th & 26th: Tree-lighting ceremonies

July 31st: If Christmas in July is still generating money, Les Caldwell will go on TV and thank his loyal clients, inducing other stores to follow suit.

August 1st: Christmas goes to Japan.

Location, Location, Location

This adventure is based on a national (potentially international) campaign which is supported by four Princes -- Nybbas, Malphas, Andrealphus and Mammon -- and encouraged by all of the others except Saminga, who couldn't care less. The game may be played out in one location, or the PC's may travel to different places and still be involved. Christmas in July is ubiquitous.

If Christmas in July lasts until August in the United States, Nybbas will import it to Japan, one of Rex's favorite places. If his plan folds in the U.S. he won't bother to expand into new territories.

The Next Episode

Next week, tune in for the next exciting adventure of ***A Very Nybbas Christmas.*** Will Nybbas succeed, or will the harp-plucking feather dusters send him packing? Find out in ***A Very Nybbas Christmas, Part II: The Bright Side.***

A Character Type for Shadowrun

by Stephen Kenson
Art by Fredd Gorham

Traditional shamanic magic in ***Shadowrun*** stems from the power of Nature and the emotions. Shamans are in tune with the natural world -- be it the Awakened wilds or the complex urban ecosystem -- via the medium of their Totems. Shamans classically tend to shun technology in favor or more "natural" magic. However, not all shamans take this attitude. In the high-tech world of the 21st century, some shamans have found that the path of technology has Power in and of itself. They are the techno-shamans.

Techno-shamans hold a unique view of technology as something of a natural ecosystem in and of itself. They see magical significance in the intricate growth and change of modern technology, as it shapes and changes the world and the people within it and is in turn changed by them. The glittering paths of the Matrix are not unlike the complex paths of the Awakened wilds, a living, pulsing world of data and energy.

Many shamans consider those of their brethren who follow this path to be strange or delusional at least, demented or mad at worse. Techno-shamans do not have a traditional totem relationship as they do. Their technological archetypes do not lend themselves to forms like the animal totems. The techno-shamans follow a more conceptual path than that of Bear or Eagle.

A character must assign Priority A to Magic and Priority B to Resources during character creation to be a techno-shaman. They then follow all of the rules and restrictions given below.

Virtual Lodges

A shamanic medicine lodge is normally a small structure such as a tent, kiva, teepee or even an open-air stone circle. The lodge is the place where the shaman gets in touch with the spirits and does his magic. It puts him in the proper frame of mind for work like summonings and ritual sorcery.

Many techno-shamans have done away with the physical lodge altogether. No more lugging around hides, stones and crystals. Instead, all the shaman needs is a simsense deck and a couple of specially programmed chips. He sets up in a desired location, slips on a 'trode net, boots up the system and enters a virtual medicine lodge "inside" the system. It is a "room" built entirely from computer graphics, with various signs and symbols in its construction, even a virtual fire burning in the center like a real medicine lodge.

In virtual space, the shaman performs his rituals. In the real world, people see only the shaman's body sitting in front of a deck, but since magic is a mental process, it is the input in the shaman's head that is important. The ritual is taking place inside the simulation, but the magic originates and takes effect in the real world.

Virtual medicine lodges function in the same way as the genuine article. They have Ratings and must remain relatively immobile once set up. It takes one day per rating point to "ground" the lodge in the location where it is set up. The program for the virtual lodge takes up 50 Mp of storage per Rating point and can be run on simdecks as well as normal cyberdecks.

When it is used by a shaman to do magic, the shaman's intense visualization of the virtual lodge causes an astral "shadow" in the shape of the lodge to be cast on the etheric plane around the shaman. Thus, the lodge is present in astral space at a Force equal to its Rating and functions as a magical and astral barrier just as a normal medicine lodge does.

Techno-fetishes

Techno-shamans often use technological objects as fetishes for their spells. Items like optical chips, circuits, gears, complex braids of optical cable or even microcomputers can serve the techno-shaman as fetishes. Through the use of virtual reality and simsense technology (see below), the techno-shaman can even use fetishes that don't even exist in the real world.

Wizzie Rigs

A wizzie rig is a small portable computer system, generally worn on a belt or chest harness, linked to a trode net or standard interface jack via a fiber optic cable. They are named after the 20th-century computer acronym WYSIWYG ("What You See Is What You Get"). The system can project sensory data and virtual objects in the user's field of vision, overlaying sights in the real world. It can tie in input from other systems like smartlinks or rangefinders, allowing it to function like a pair of smartgoggles or a sensory display.

In addition to its mundane technical uses, techno-shamans use wizzie rigs as visualization and focusing aids much in the same way other magicians use scrolls, wands and other fetishes. The rig can project "virtual fetishes" that appear real to the shaman in every sensory detail, provide appropriate backdrops or even the right music and chants as needed for working magic.

Plenty of techno-shamans also go the full chrome route of getting a datajack and display link to allow them to upload the information and imagery they use directly into their brains. Most consider the slight loss in magical ability made up for by the advantages of a better "feed."

Astral Space

Strongly-rooted in the physical, tangible world, techno-shamans have no access to astral space, either for astral perception or projection (SRII, p.145). Their "otherworld" is the technological realm of the Matrix. Techno-shamans are also unable to use many forms of Metamagic, due to their lack of astral perception.

Sorcery

Techno-shamans use the Sorcery skill for spellcasting and ritual sorcery in the same manner as other magicians (SRII, p.133). They make use of virtual fetishes and unique links for ritual sorcery.

Virtual Fetishes

A fetish is a symbolic object that helps a magician to focus the intent of a spellcasting. The appearance, feel, and so forth of the fetish serves as a mental "cue" that helps the magician evoke the proper state of mind for the spell.

A virtual fetish does much the same thing, only it does not actually exist in the real world. The sight, sound and feel of the fetish is simulated by a simsense program and fed directly into the magician's brain by an electronic interface.

For example, if a shaman requires an eagle's feather in order to cast the Levitate Person spell, a simrig could be used

to create a virtual feather that looked and felt exactly like a real one. Only the shaman would see it, however. To everyone else, his hand would appear empty.

Virtual fetishes may only be Reusable (since the VR image never actually gets used up), giving the caster a +1 to the effective Force of the spell. The fetish takes up 2 Mp of storage per Force point of the spell (higher force spells require fetishes of greater resolution).

Techno-Foci

Basically speaking, the physical form of a focus does not affect its value as a magical item. Thus, a Rating 3 Power Focus can just as easily be a desktop computer or a gun as it can be a jeweled wand carved with runes. Techno-shamans often make use of technical devices and equipment as foci, including enchanted hot rigs and cyberdecks. The main limitation of this sort of enchanting is that hand-made telesma are rare (unless the shaman has the appropriate Build/Repair skills) and virgin telesma are all but unheard of (indeed, impossible in most cases).

Ritual Links

A ritual link is an item that has an intimate symbolic relationship to a subject; such as a cell sample from a living being or an integral part of a non-living object. Techno-shamans have used ritual symbolism in new and interesting ways in their tradition.

The first is the fact that because cyberware is so closely bound with an individual wearer's aura through the expenditure of Essence, it becomes an effective part of the auric whole. Thus a portion of an individual's cyberware like a discarded control chip or a strand of fiber optic cable can be used as a ritual link to that person.

Ritual links may also have a more symbolic relationship to the subject, like an image of the subject molded from wax or clay. Techno-shamans use symbolic links such as digitized computer images or electronic genemaps to link to a subject for ritual magic.

Conjuring

Nature Spirits

Techno-shamans are strongly connected to the Domains of Man. They may only conjure Spirits of Man and cannot summon other types of nature spirits. They may use their Conjuring skill to attempt to Banish other spirits, but they can only attempt to control Spirits of Man.

Watchers

Techno-shamans may conjure watchers normally. The shamans often put a technological "spin" on their watchers by having them appear as floating cameras, tiny robots or computer icons.

Ally Spirits

An ally spirit conjured by a techno-shaman often has a technological basis. Many inhabit mechanical devices that have been especially Enchanted as homunculi to receive them such as clockwork robots, computers or even cars. The abilities of the machine and the ally are generally separate, but the ally can control the machine's physical movements and functions.

The Matrix

For techno-shamans, the Matrix is the ultimate expression of technological development. It is a vast symbol of the

power and majesty of technology writ in glowing icons in the blackness of virtual space. Many techno-shamans conceive of the Matrix as a sort of "higher plane," a more advanced state of being than mere flesh and blood and seek to achieve enlightenment by freeing themselves to exist in the virtual world as beings of pure intellect.

Their unique view of virtual reality makes the techno-shamans superlative, almost savant-like natural programmers. They see the flow of code in the Matrix in an almost magical way, manipulating them like a mage might weave a spell. Most techno-shamans have the Computer skill and some ability at cyberdecking. Many invest a high Resources allocation into the computer software and hardware needed to run the matrix and create the techno-fetishes and foci that they use.

More Implements of Destruction for Feng Shui

by Steve Hammond

Art by Kurt Brugel

August 15

I had a big job coming up. The Buro cyborgs had wiped the floor with us last time; and now I was looking for a special weapon. Not just to give us an edge, but to show those slimeballs they should be more careful next time they pick a fight. I opened the secret panel behind the dresser, but everything there was old, passe even. I needed some new firepower to change the odds for this fight.

I rang my fav merchant and explained to him that I was looking to upgrade some hardware. He said he had what I needed and to meet him at the usual place. When I arrived he had a crate of state-of-the-art goodies waiting, and they were all calling my name.

New Gun Schticks

Deep Pockets

Ever notice how action heroes always seem to have that Remington 870 handy just when they need it -- or how immortals can keep a large sword hidden under their trench coat? Each schtick taken allows a character to reduce the total concealment value of all weapons carried by 2 or increase the maximum number of weapons carried by 1. The concealment value for carried weapons can never drop below 0.

Ricochet Shot

Any time an opponent has taken cover behind a solid object, a ricochet shot can be used to get him anyway. Each schtick reduces the concealment of the target by one level as shown on the Cover Chart on ***Feng Shui,*** p. 159. Thus a character with 2 schticks against a foe with 90% concealment would use the +2 difficulty for 50% concealment.

New Guns

Handguns

Sig-Saur P229, .357 SIG 11/2/12+1

This weapon is sure to spark heated debates among the gunslingers in any group. It packs the ballistic characteristics and stopping power of a .357 in a compact package suitable for a semiautomatic pistol. Users of 9mm pistols and .357 revolvers probably disagree.

Taurus Model 608 .357 Magnum 11/3/8

With the introduction of this gem the 6-shot revolver has become a weapon for mooks and old timers. No self-respecting PC should have to suffer without the two extra rounds Taurus has so graciously provided.

Thompson/Center Contender .45-70 13/3/1

This gun was used by the main bad guy in the John Woo film *Hard Target.* This is a single-shot target pistol that fires rifle-caliber ammunition. It comes in a variety of calibers and the barrels are interchangeable -- of course, only the largest is presented here. It is breech-loading, like a double-barrel shotgun, and takes 3 shots to reload. The Contender takes out unnamed mooks on a 4 or more.

Submachine Guns

Beretta 93-R 10/2/20+1

A high-quality, semi-automatic pistol reengineered to fire three-round bursts from an extended magazine. The 93-R was used to great effect by John Travolta in *Broken Arrow.*

Calico 961-A 10/3/100

Using a special cylindrical magazine, the 961 packs a truly awesome amount of firepower into a small package. It has a sleek, high-tech look for the most discriminating warrior. It can also be had with a variety of cool accessories, including a shoulder harness which holds the gun, and an extra 100-round magazine -- just in case the first 100 are insufficient. A semiautomatic pistol version is also available.

FN P90 11/4/50

More of a carbine than a submachine gun, the P90 features a sleek, almost organic, look. This gun is different enough for the most eccentric shadow warrior and deadly enough for the most practical. It fires an unusual plastic-core bullet and the transparent magazine lies on top of the gun, parallel to the barrel. Of course, its amazing profile is more important than its other advantages.

Steyr TMP 10/3/30+1

The Steyr “Tactical Machine Pistol” is an ergonomically designed submachine gun, vaguely reminiscent of the MAC-10. For those who prefer a classic, the MAC-10's stats happen to be 10/3/32.

Shotguns

Only the MAG-7 is eligible for the "KA-CHINK" bonus for having a pump action.

Sawed-off Double-barrel 13/3/2

I don't know how the author of ***Feng Shui*** could have missed this classic: a double-barrel, 12 gauge wand of death; sawed off to something less than the 18” legal limit. Use the formula from the “Both Guns Blazing” schtick if both barrels are fired simultaneously.

Techno Arms MAG-7 13/4/5+1

This weapon was practically designed for ***Feng Shui:*** A concealable, pump-action, 12 gauge shotgun pistol from South Africa. It looks like an Uzi on steroids -- the foregrip serves as the pump and the magazine fits in the grip, taking 3 shots to reload. The MAG-7 uses a custom 60mm shell to keep the pistol grip from being too wide.

Striker 12 13/5/12

A large-capacity shotgun out of South Africa, the Striker holds 12 rounds in a revolving cylinder. The size of the cylinder makes the Striker harder to conceal, but the ammo capacity and cool name make up for that. Use these stats for the Streetsweeper and the Dragon 12x12 which are essentially the same -- you can tell because they have cool names as well.

USAS 12 13/5/20

A full-auto assault shotgun with a really massive profile. Use the standard autofire rules with this gun, except a single round is treated as a three-round burst for both damage and recoil. This weapon also takes 3 shots to reload.

Rifles

Airrow A-8S1P Stealth 7/5/1

An interesting rifle seen in the movie *Hard Target.* With a stock and grip similar to the M-16, the Airrow A-8S fires a crossbow bolt using compressed air. It takes 3 shots to reload, and you get about 12 shots per cylinder of air. This weapon can fire tranquilizer darts and special attachments will allow it to shoot grapples and rescue lines. The Airrow breaks down into a briefcase making it an ideal package for thieves and ninjas.

Barrett Light-Fifty Model 82 15/8/10

A very large, .50-caliber sniper rifle. The Barrett is not capable of full-auto fire, but it does take down unnamed mooks on a 2 or more.

Winchester .30-30 13/5/6

This lever-action rifle hasn’t changed much since 1894, when it was introduced. It is the weapon of choice for old coots in rural America who don't use the Ruger Red Label to protect their stills.

H&K G-11 13/5/50

The first caseless battle rifle, this weapon has yet to be adopted by any nation. State of the art now, the G-11 is likely

to be old tech by 2056, making this a prime weapon for the Jammers and their allies.

Artillery

These are exceptionally large weapons, which do really cool amounts of damage. The GM should generally use these as plot devices to be found by the characters and used in the climatic encounter at the end of the adventure. They can also be used by the bad guys to even out a fight.

M72 LAW Rocket */4/1

This is a disposable rocket which causes a *big* explosion at the point of impact (see ***Feng Shui,*** p. 161 for details on big explosions). GMs should note that if the rocket misses its intended target, it will explode somewhere else. In either case, it will cause liberal amounts of collateral damage. The LAW is loads of fun in a convenient, take-home package. The RPG-7 is a reusable rocket launcher that uses the same rules. It takes 6 shots to reload the RPG-7.

M-79 40mm Grenade Launcher */4/1

The M-79 is a single-shot grenade launcher. It causes a medium explosion at the point of impact -- 14 points out to 3 meters and 6 points beyond that. It takes 4 shots to reload this weapon. These stats can be used for the M-203 which mounts under an M-16 rifle. The concealability rating for the combination would be 6. The Armscor MGL uses the same ammunition in a six-round revolving cylinder. Its concealability is 6 as well. 40mm buckshot (damage 13) and tear-gas rounds are also available. When exposed to tear gas a character must make a constitution check with a difficulty of 10. For example, if Slippery Joe rolls a 7, he will suffer 3 points of impairment and be -3 to all actions. Once exposure stops, the effect lasts for 30 minutes. Characters must make the constitution check each sequence until they fail a check or they leave the gas. Gas masks provide complete protection while a wet cloth tied over the mouth and nose reduces the difficulty to 7.

M60 or M249 Machine Gun 13/8/200**

When the mooks start pouring out of the woodwork, there is only weapon for the job -- the M-60 machine gun. Its cousin, the M-249 is capable of firing M-16 ammunition from M-16 magazines in addition to the 200-round belts it normally uses. Both of these weapons take out unnamed mooks on a 3 or more.

.50 Cal M2, "Ma-duce" 15/9/100

Maximum firepower! This weapon was designed to be mounted on vehicles and tanks for use against the same. This weapon cannot be fired without being mounted to a vehicle or tripod. Like the Barrett above, unnamed mooks drop on a 2 or more when hit by the M-2. The statistics for this weapon can also be used for the gatling guns used in *Predator* and *Terminator 2.*

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Table 1 – New Guns List

Weapon	Damage/Concealment/Capacity
Pistols	
Sig-Saur P229 .357 SIG	11/2/12+1
Taurus Model 608, .357 Mag	11/3/8
T/C Contender .45-70	13*/3/1
Submachine Guns	
Beretta 93-R	10/2/20+1
Calica 961-A	10/3/100
FN P90	11/4/50
Steyer TMP	10/3/30
Ingram MAC-10	10/3/32
Shotguns	
Sawed-off double-barrel 12 ga	13/3/2
Techno Arm Mag-7	13/4/5+1
Striker 12	13/5/12
USAS 12	13/5/20
Rifles	
Airrow A-8S1P Stealth	7/5/1
Barrett Model 82	15***/8/10
Winchester .30-30	13/5/6
H&K G-11	13*/5/50
Artillery	
M72 LAW Rocket	X/4/1
RPG-7 Rocket Launcher	X/4/1
M-79 Grenade Launcher	X/4/1
M203	X/6/1
Armscor MGL	X/6/6
M60 Machine Gun	13**/8/200
M249 Machine Gun	13**/8/200
.50 Cal M2 Machine Gun	15***/9/100
Gatling gun	15***/9/100

X -- Weapon does explosion damage
* -- Takes out unnamed characters on a 4 or more
** -- Takes out unnamed characters on a 3 or more
*** -- Takes out unnamed characters on a 2 or more

A Very Nybbas Christmas
Part Two: The Bright Side

An In Nomine Resource
by Alain H. Dawson
Art by Dan Smith

Last week on "A Very Nybbas Christmas," our hero, Nybbas, set a plan in motion to turn Christmas into the media holiday he's always wanted it to be. He enlisted the capable help of Jezreel, a Balseraph in the Role of an advertising executive, and his own son, Rex the Demon of Cool. They liberated the Blumenfield's account from their competition and began to create and air their brilliant "Christmas in July" commercials. Rex is featured prominently in these ads, as is the knockout redhead Lola, a Lilim of Lust who is, not coincidentally, Rex's current girlfriend. Unbeknownst to him, she has a hidden agenda: Andrealphus told her to stick close to Rex and get a Geas on him before the Christmas campaign is over.

The dark, brooding Prince of Factions joined forces with our hero to further heighten interfaith tensions in our far too tolerant society. Malphas sent the Impudite Hazael to goad other retail companies into the Christmas Spirit using his nationally syndicated column as a forum. However, behind our hero's back Malphas unleashed Jehozabad with orders to convince other demons that Christmas in July is an angelic plot.

Tabitha, a Habbalite of Greed, entered into the Christmas Spirit by setting up a fake charity to separate humans from the corrupting influence of their money. She also created a credit card company which encourages constant spending and penalizes those trying to avoid debt.

Christmas in July debuted on the first of July, to the applause of critics everywhere! (For an instant replay, read "A Very Nybbas Christmas, Part One." Phase Two is now commencing: our hero and his collaborators must keep building the momentum until the entire nation is caught up in Christmas, either positively or (better yet) negatively. But, as always, there's a catch . . .

The Grinches

Obviously, Nybbas cannot launch such a grandiose plan without heavenly interference. Unfortunately for him, the forces of good are close at hand. The advertising firm of Brown & Samuels is home not only to a demon, but to an alert Soldier of God with an even more alert angelic patron. If either of them catch a whiff of demonic activity they will try to shut it down. Failing that, they'll call in reinforcements.

Marcel Kim

Soldier of God

Corporeal Forces -- 2 Strength 4 Will 4
Ethereal Forces -- 2 Intelligence 6 Precision 2
Celestial Forces -- 2 Will 3 Perception 5
Status: 3

Skills: Computer Operation/3, Dodge/1, Drive/2, Knowledge (Advertising/2), Language (Korean/4)
Songs: Healing (Corporeal/3), Shields (Corporeal/3)

Marcel is a first-generation American from a Eurasian family. His parents raised him to strive for two things; faith and success. His faith is decidedly Catholic, and his success is coming along nicely. He is the first person in his family to graduate from college (on a full scholarship), and from there he went to work for Brown & Samuels.

At work he made the acquaintance of Deborah, a Servitor of Marc and a client of the firm. She was struck by his kindness and honesty, rare qualities in the advertising business, and recently recruited him. He is happy with his position in the War, considering it to fill the criteria both for success and faith.

Marcel is a personable young man, handsome in a collegiate way, and painfully earnest. His style of dress is pure yuppie. He lives in a tiny apartment in Manhattan.

He has no idea that Jessica Meyers is the demon Jezreel, but she does rub him the wrong way. He dislikes her way of selling and doing business and he would be happy to put her out of commission.

When he hears of the Christmas in July campaign he is deeply offended and suspicious. He thinks that Something Must Be Done about this bastardization of his religion and he pleads with his angelic superior to put a stop to it.

Deborah

Elohite Vassal of Trade

Corporeal Forces -- 3 Strength 3 Agility 9
Ethereal Forces -- 4 Intelligence 8 Precision 8
Celestial Forces -- 3 Will 4 Perception 8
Vessel: Human/3
Role: Entrepreneur/4, Status/4
Skills: Computer Operation/4, Driving/2, Dodge/3, Fast-Talk/3, Knowledge (Business Management/5), Language (Japanese/3)
Songs: Harmony (Ethereal/4), Healing (Corporeal/3, Ethereal/2), Tongues (Corporeal/3, Ethereal/4)
Attunements: Elohite of Trade, Vassal of Trade, Divine Contract, Head of a PIN

Deborah is a young angel, quite at home in the modern world of finance. As an Elohite, she finds the logic of numbers more to her liking than the erratic humans behind them, but she enjoys the added challenge that emotions bring to doing business. They are a variable, affecting business transactions the way luck affects poker.

On Earth she acts as a white knight, bailing out or protecting companies which Marc feels are deserving. Underdogs are glad to see her, empire-builders wish that she would fall off the face of the planet.

She is fond of Marcel, considering him to be her discovery, but she tends to patronize him. She thinks his point of view is too narrow, chalking it up to inexperience and not being able to see the Symphony for the notes. However, she does try to accommodate his requests so as not to discourage him and ruin his impressive zeal for his job as a Soldier.

Passing the Buck

Marcel has hounded Deborah relentlessly to interfere with Christmas in July. He has no proof that it is a demonic plot, he simply believes that it is injurious to the sanctity of Christmas and must therefore be terminated. Since he doesn't have anywhere near the seniority to block Jezreel, he has requested that Deborah speak to Marc about it.

However, Marc welcomed the Christmas in July idea as a way to lift the retail market out of its summer doldrums. Upon hearing this, Marcel still refused to drop the subject. To keep him happy, Deborah agreed to tell some of her friends who might be interested in sparing Christianity the embarrassment of Christmas in July.

Jehoiakim

Malakite Servitor of the Sword

Corporeal Forces -- 4 Strength 10 Agility 6
Ethereal Forces -- 2 Intelligence 4 Precision 4
Celestial Forces -- 3 Will 8 Perception 4
Vessel: Human/4, Dog/2
Skills: Dodge/3, Fighting/3, Large Weapon (Sword/2), Tactics/2
Songs: Numinous Corpus (Claws/2), Thunder (Corporeal/3)
Attunements: Malakite of the Sword, Hunt, Holy Fortitude

Jehoiakim is one of the more fervent supporters of Christianity in Laurence's ranks. He firmly believes that the key to the Symphony is getting all of humanity thinking in one direction, and if Laurence thinks that Christianity is a good direction, who would he be to argue.

Along with his single-minded devotion, he is notoriously devoid of a sense of humor. He sees nothing amusing about Christmas in July. In fact, he dislikes any secularization of Christmas because it is part of the core of Christian belief.

Jehoiakim is one of those angels who doesn't spend much time on Earth because he takes everything too seriously. His faux pas potential is astronomical. Laurence uses him for specific, dangerous assignments and then calls him back to Heaven. However, Jehoiakim has earned some autonomy and he is happy to respond to Deborah's request. He is eager for any opportunity to strike a blow for his favorite religion.

And He Told Two Friends . . .

After scoping out the problem, Jehoiakim decides that he can't handle the enormity of Christmas in July by himself. Because of the national scope of the advertising campaign, he has enlisted the help of two of his comrades. He knows that he is in over his head, and that his suspicions are unproven. Without further evidence he doesn't want to ask Laurence for help, but like Marcel he smells a rat and he refuses to drop his investigation. He has asked angels of a more subtle persuasion than himself to confirm his fears before he voices them to a higher authority.

Mishael

Seraph Vassal of the Sword

Corporeal Forces -- 3 Strength 5 Agility 7
Ethereal Forces -- 4 Intelligence 7 Precision 9
Celestial Forces -- 4 Will 8 Perception 8
Vessel: Human/4
Skills: Acrobatics/2, Detect Lies/4, Dodge/4, Fighting/3, Large Weapon (Sword/6), Tracking/4, Savior-Faire/1, Emote/1
Songs: Harmony (Ethereal/3), Healing (Corporeal/2, Ethereal/3, Celestial/3), Light (Celestial/4)
Artifact: Fiery Sword/3
Attunements: Seraph of the Sword, Vassal of the Sword, The Blade Blessing of Laurence, Scabbard, Purity of Purpose

Mishael is an investigator *par excellence.* She is a diplomat by nature, but once she has enough evidence to indicate a

course of action, she acts without hesitation. She is the embodiment of the phrase "cooler heads shall prevail."

Laurence entrusts her with assignments in which the truth is obscure and subtlety is required, but she is no spy. All of her investigations take place in the open, however she has no compunctions about telling people only what they need to know. In fact, Mishael prefers to listen rather than talk, and more than one person has made the mistake of forgetting she was around.

In combat, no one forgets about Mishael. Demons have been known to flee at the sight of her ruthless expression, illuminated by the dangerous flames of her sword. Despite her abilities, she prefers to avoid violence unless she has no choice. When she has no choice, she fights to win.

She has had to babysit Jehoiakim in the past and she is fond of him in a motherly fashion. His simplistic world view refreshes her, although she finds him a bit too rambunctious. However, she does not patronize his extreme dedication and she is happy to help him with his current problem.

Azariah

Ofanite Servitor of Judgment

Corporeal Forces -- 3 Strength 4 Agility 8
Ethereal Forces -- 3 Intelligence 6 Precision 6
Celestial Forces -- 4 Will 5 Perception 11
Vessel: Human/3, Horse/2
Skills: Acrobatics/3, Dodge/3, Driving/5, Escape/4, Knowledge (United States Geography/5), Tracking/3
Songs: Motion (Corporeal/3, Ethereal/2, Celestial/3), Light (Ethereal/4), Shields (Celestial/3)
Artifact: Stunt Cycle/4
Attunements: Ofanite of Judgment, Incarnate Law

Cruising the highways and byways of America, Azariah only slows down for one thing: Discord. She uses her Ofanite of Judgment attunement like a cop uses a radar gun, except she is moving and her targets are (usually) stationary. She likes big, crowded cities teeming with people, because the larger and denser the population, the more likely she is to find the shriek of Discord within it. As a Servitor of Dominic, angels are her main focus, but she certainly won't ignore any source of Discord she may stumble across.

Confrontation is not her style. When she discovers a Discordant being, she passes along the information to one of Dominic's servants more specialized in investigation. She earmarks potential problems so that Dominic can check them out in their early stages, but she never hangs around to find out what happens.

In person she looks petite, blonde and wiry, with a short, spiky haircut apparently styled by 100 mile an hour winds. She will occasionally manifest as a palomino quarter horse, but this is more for relaxation than pursuit.

Azariah is friendly with Mishael, the Servitor of Laurence having performed mop-up duty for her on more than one occasion. Azariah finds Mishael's stillness fascinating, but the urge to move on prevents her from becoming very close to the Seraph. They do touch base from time to time, and Mishael hopes that with some direction, the Ofanite might be useful in uncovering a diabolical presence amongst the Christmas in July team.

The Children's Crusade

Christopher doesn't care who is behind the Christmas media blitz, he just wants it stopped. The Christmas cartoon and the ads are targeting children's innocence and love of the holiday, twisting the youngsters' point of view until they can only be satisfied with toys.

The Archangel of Children has started fighting fire with fire. He has assigned a Soldier to take the battle to the enemy

-- in other words, to go on TV.

Jose Martinez

Soldier of God

Corporeal Forces -- 2 Strength 4 Agility 4
Ethereal Forces -- 2 Intelligence 5 Precision 3
Celestial Forces -- 2 Will 3 Perception 5
Status: 5
Skills: Artistry (Script Writing/4), Drive/3, Knowledge (TV Production/3), Language (Spanish/4)
Songs: Healing (Corporeal/2)

Born in Nicaragua, Jose's family emigrated to the United States to avoid the fighting and bloodshed during the eighties. Adjusting to their newly adopted country proved to be difficult as they were overwhelmed by information, and often they wasted their little money on worthless junk that looked good on TV. His parents had never had so many choices before and their naivete often got them in trouble or cost them their hard-earned wages.

Jose learned to be cynical very early in life because of such experiences and focused his indignation at the huge media machine that controls America's information. He ended up majoring in communications at UCLA, driven by a desire to interject some truth and balance into the television medium.

Ahijah, a Mercurian of Children, first noticed Jose when he quit a lucrative children's show to protest against the producer's ethics. The angel was impressed by Jose's rapport with kids and knowledge of television production. He recruited Jose as a Soldier and with encouragement from Christopher, he found Jose another job; producing his own children's show for public television.

The show, *Tell It Like It Is,* began airing in June and immediately picked up a cult of approving critics, college students and parents, but more importantly, kids love it. At home with a shoestring budget, Jose uses great writing, curiosity and honesty to keep his audience interested. His topics range from scientific to social to religious, but his main message to his viewers is "think for yourself." He may do on-air consumer testing and deconstruct an advertisement so that kids can see the exaggeration in the ad's claims.

Sadly, like most public TV shows, *Tell It Like It Is* doesn't get the attention it deserves from mainstream viewers, but little by little it is gaining ground, helping a few more children think for themselves every day.

Christopher has sent word to Jose that the Christmas in July campaign is false and pernicious. Demons or no demons, he wants some kind of balance for the lure of the ads. Jose is to provide that balance, using his show to help kids separate the hype from the holiday.

Reactions Upstairs

Upon receiving any serious proof of Christmas in July's demonic connection, Laurence and Dominic will act, sending down reinforcements for their Servitors already on the scene and authorizing them to recruit other angels to the cause.

Even if the angels don't find anything concrete, when Christmas in July turns into Christmas in August, Laurence will mobilize his available Earthly servants to combat this menace to Christianity.

On first inspection, Marc thought Christmas in July would benefit the economy and he will be slow to change his mind. It goes without saying that if he discovers Nybbas' hand manipulating the campaign he will have an abrupt change of opinion. If Jezreel's long-term plans are brought to light he will also take action to stop them. A brief rise in spending is good, but prolonged spending and debt can only hurt the economy and possibly trigger a recession. When he realizes that Christmas in July is not scheduled to end *ever,* he will stop thinking that it's a good idea.

Of all the Superiors, Marc has the best chance of combating Christmas in July effectively and *quietly*. Nybbas is waging a very public campaign, but it will die like a fish in the Sahara if no money comes rolling in. Marc and his angels can undermine Nybbas' whole plan by financial strangulation, but first they must be convinced that Christmas in July is detrimental to trade.

Christopher is unlikely to urge his Servitors into a direct confrontation with Nybbas' henchmen, but he will be very interested in damage control. Any way his angels can teach children about the true meaning of Christmas or how to resist the advertisements will be much appreciated. Better still, Christopher would like to see the Christmas cartoon and all its tie-ins bumped from syndication or sabotaged.

Les Caldwell, Blumenfield's CEO (see "A Very Nybbas Christmas, Part One." is only interested in getting his company into the black. He has no attachment to Jezreel's ad campaign, and he would be happy to try something else if he thinks it will work better or if Christmas in July bombs.

The Players

Angel player-characters can get involved with Nybbas' plans several ways:

- Nybbas himself will show up at Brown & Samuels to consult with Jezreel, and may pop up at random during the commercial shoots and promotional appearances.
- Jezreel, Rex and Lola will be appearing around the country, performing tree-lighting ceremonies and promoting the Blumenfield's ad campaign.
- Either Marcel or the PCs could sneak a look at Jezreel's files.
- Servants of Dominic and Laurence will be told in no uncertain terms that they must prevent this perversion of the Christian faith.
- Their own superiors -- Christopher in particular -- may instruct them to put a stop to the advertisements.
- Any of the NPCs that are involved can call on a player-character for help.
- Jehozabad might try to possess a PC in an attempt to confuse and mislead other demons into thinking the angels are to blame for Christmas in July.

- The characters may have to defuse tensions between different religious groups who are incensed about the offensive Christmas campaign.

  Even if they receive no orders, the characters will hardly be able to escape the ads, the Christmas muzak, the fake trees and reruns of "It's A Wonderful Life." Out of a regard for the sanctity of the holiday, a fear of interfaith turmoil, or perhaps in self-defense, the characters will have to do something if they want the elves and the "Ho-ho-ho"ing to go away.

Balancing the Adventure

In a demonic campaign, the angel NPCs should be played up, constantly nipping at the player-characters' heels. The angels serving Dominic and Laurence can call in hefty back-up if the PCs harass them, providing possible combat and face-to-face encounters. Servitors of Marc are more subtle: the demon PCs may not know someone is working against them until things start to go wrong.

Conversely, Jehozabad could convince the characters that the angels are behind this early Christmas, leading to mass confusion as they scheme against their own hellish brethren.

If the demon PCs get confused about their role in this adventure, there are plenty of high-level demon NPCs to give them a kick in the right direction.

In an angelic campaign, the balancing factor is the fact that the demons have a head start. They've been planning their moves for weeks and the player-characters will have to play catch-up. There are enough demon NPCs with enough agendas to keep any group of angels busy.

If the PCs are not very powerful the GM can clue them in to Nybbas' involvement before Christmas in July actually starts, giving them more time to stop it. If the characters are feeling overwhelmed, strengthen the angelic NPCs' support or provide some convenient back-up from an alert Superior.

The Outcome

Hellspawn

The demonic goal is to prolong the fake Christmas season for as long as possible. Each week the characters help this goal should net them extra character points in addition to points awarded for individual gaming sessions. If Nybbas' plan makes it until August, the GM should give them another bonus.

In game terms, demons have plenty of opportunity for advancement if they prolong Christmas in July. Four Princes are heavily involved in this adventure, so good roleplaying should meet with fast rewards. If the demon PCs made a contribution above and beyond merely supporting Christmas in July, they could be in for an attunement or distinction. They can also make connections to some of Hell's high fliers, especially Rex, who isn't picky about his friends as long as they admire him.

If Christmas in July failed, the Princes will probably focus their wrath on the plot's organizers, letting off the little guys. However, important demons anxious to cover their butts will be looking for dupes and fall-guys, so the characters should make themselves scarce if they are smart.

If the PCs fell for Jehozabad's lies and interfered with Christmas in July, there won't be a hole deep enough to hide them from Nybbas. However, if they went after a *real* angel successfully they can parlay that achievement into a reward, even if they were suckered.

Heaven Sent

The angels are trying to block the myriad facets of Christmas in July. They should get extra points for each branch of Nybbas' plan they shut down or cripple. This award should increase or decrease according to how much they disturbed the Symphony in pursuit of their goal.

Laurence, Marc and Christopher are the most likely Superiors to take notice of the PCs' successes, although if they did something spectacular their own Superiors will take note, even if they weren't on assignment.

If the characters were working on their own recognizance, failing to slow Nybbas' campaign will earn them neither reward nor censure. However, if their Superior gave them orders to stop Christmas in July and they failed, the PCs will have to explain what went wrong and may be punished.

In the event that Jehozabad took over one of the player-characters and incriminated him, the angel's Superior may have to investigate what happened before letting him off the hook. This could lead to a further adventure as the angels track down the Shedite and put an end to it.

Concerning The Djinn . . .

. . . In the World of Castle Falkenstein

by Phil Masters

Art by Ray Lunceford

Being a number of observations, largely as recounted by Auberon of Faerie to Captain Thomas E. Olam, and prepared for publication in this world by Philip Masters, Magister Artium Cantabrigiensis. (Extracted and adapted from a forthcoming volume concerning the Lands of the Ottoman Empire in that world.)

Of Solomon and the Bound Ones

Remarks, by Auberon of Faerie

It is hardly a secret that we of Faerie are divided among ourselves. The great division is, of course, between the "Seelie," my own people, and the "Unseelie" servants of the Adversary. However, there are other factions and hierarchies, and one of the most potent and independent-minded groups consists of the Djinn of the Arabian Lands.

As so often with my folk, there is a tale here, which commences, "Once Upon A Time."

It is the tale of an old falling-out among the Sidhe. Some three thousand years past, a band of brash Sidhe lords took umbrage at some imagined lack of respect. Being, for the most part, denizens of Araby, they took that region for their own. They were mostly of the darker side of our folk, but perhaps more selfish than brutal; some, in fact, were honorable, after their fashion. They claimed authority over Sidhe and men alike, and declared themselves Lords, acting as monarchs rather than the barons that they truly were. But their superiors chose to disregard this; some perhaps saw them as useful future-times allies and pawns. Most of 'em were already arrayed with the Unseelie -- but in truth, the point was rarely raised. These *Djinn* went their own way.

They built improbable palaces and cities as marks of their power. (Some still exist, in deep caverns in the mountains of Arabia, 'neath the waters of the Red or Indian or Mediterranean Seas, or lost in the trackless desert. Most of 'em are empty, but all the same, I'd not advise visiting.) They carved out petty kingdoms; when they deigned to notice humans, they would destroy cities and armies. Worst were those who chose to intervene in human life; they would offer their services to kings who would repay with blood sacrifices, not because they had much use for human blood, but for sport, and out of secret admiration for the ingenuity that humans brought to the ensuing wars. The brutishness of Assyria and the decadence of Babylon were largely incited by these "Ifrit." The least of 'em wandered the wilderness in monstrous guise, slaying and laying waste at whim.

Pride, a wise human has observed, precedes a fall; it makes one forget that one's power is not infinite. The Djinn despised humans, and paid little attention to the growth of human skill. 'Twas an understandable error; many of us would love to know whence King Solomon ben David of Israel derived his lore. Solomon feared what the Djinn might do to his kingdom, and set out to resolve the problem. He crafted binding inscriptions that any human could wield, and simple spells of control that the lowliest hedge-wizard could master. Like other clever humans, he exploited the Faerie inability to break a sworn oath, trapping whole clans of evil Djinn in webs of promises. He was even shrewd enough to bargain with the more honorable lesser Djinn, gaining their service by showing himself preferable to overlords of their own race; 'tis said that, when he was done, a thousand of 'em would obey the slightest gesture of the hand which bore his seal-ring.

This was a Long and Secret War, the full record of which is known to none in modern Europa. (Even I have only

second-hand tales and deductions.) Suffice it to say that Solomon forced many Djinn into brass bottles or stone pillars, closed with his Seal, and many of these prisoners have spent the last three thousand years at the bottom of the sea. Even those who are free are oft obliged to wear Iron Bracelets in symbol of their subservience, preventing them from changing shape or using many other supernatural arts. The symbol of this victory is the Seal of Solomon, which no Djinni may pass.

And so the Djinn are mostly trapped, or retire from human company out of caution. However, the rest of Faerie-kind still avoid their lands, partly out of ancient habit, partly out of fear of the Djinn, and partly out of a subtler fear. We are not formally bound by Solomon's master-work, but it has overtones and aspects that none have yet mapped; "Solomanic" spells might, at the very least, induce discomfort in us.

Which said, there are some lesser Faerie free in the Middle East -- mostly foul *Ghuls* and nymph-like *Peri.* But the Djinn were never numerous. I estimate that no more than five hundred might still endure within the lands of Arabia. However, we of Faerie have never taken censuses.

The Classes of the Unclassifiable

The Djinn have oft shown great skill in the art of Shape Changing. All of our kind can do this, o' course, but the Djinn view it as a science in itself, whereas most Faerie find a shape they like or inherit, and stick to it. (Many Djinn are bound to one shape, though, courtesy of Solomon.)

This makes classification of the Djinn a tricksy matter, for who can pin a name on that which has no fixed shape? But one may discern a few categories, or maybe ranks.

The greatest of the breed are the *Noble Djinn,* builders of palaces. The nobility is further divided into the malevolent *Ifrit* and the less selfish crew who are sometimes simply termed "Djinn."

The Ifrit are equivalent to the Dark Lords of the Unseelie, and likewise owe allegiance to the Adversary. However, recall that these are the most potent and selfish of a band who went into exile rather than remain in the society of their own kind. I doubt that even the Adversary can be sure of their obedience; I'm sure their vows to him had weasel words to spare. They are, fortunately, bound by both his vows in the First Compact, and spells woven by Solomon; thus, they rarely seek to harm the Sons of Adam directly, unless they forget themselves in rage, or they can provoke a fool to assault, or they think a little murder would not be noticed. (Though to open an ancient brass bottle on the shores of Araby is oft unwise.)

Other Noble Djinn are gentler folk, and less danger to men -- but yet they are aloof, or whimsical, or both. They are just, in their way, but that does not remove their whimsy; there are many tales of human unfortunates receiving sudden and startling boons from powerful Djinn who take pity on them. In the courts and palaces of the nobles, you may find their servants, who are sometimes referred to as *Jann.* These are powerful folk, even by the standards of Faerie, but narrow in imagination. They enter service, less out of loyalty or even compulsion, than because it's become their habit, and because it gives 'em a way to spend their time. They may be evil or kindly, but they rarely act either way unprovoked. They make most useful minions to the Nobles. Some of this class are unattached, having seen their overlords trapped or retired from this world, and wander the fringes of human city life, or lurk in wells or cisterns or ruins. They are responsible for much of Djinn-kind's reputation for whimsy; if a Jann should hear of some happening that catches his humor, he may help hunt down a criminal, or take a complaining husband a thousand miles from the wife he's called a scold, or present a feast to a beggar -- or drop an unfortunate stroller in a pool, to see how humans accomplish this swimming business.

Peri, I confess, I know least about. They are more frequently encountered in Persia than in the Ottoman domains of Turkey or Arabia; they take female shape, and seem closely akin to the Nymphs and Forest Women of Europa. They are rarely evil, but they are proud.

Last, and least, are the Ghuls. The Englishman Edward William Lane wrote of these:

The Ghools are said to appear in the forms of human beings, and of various animals, and in many monstrous shapes; to haunt burial-grounds and other sequestered spots; to feed upon dead human bodies; and to kill and devour any human creature who has the misfortune to fall in their way.

-- Which sums 'em up, I think. They may be Jann, or even Nobles diminished by Magick, or they may be crude monsters, akin to the Ogres and Trolls of Europa. Whatever its history, a Ghul is a nasty creature.

Appearances

Arabian sages describe the Djinn as being created of "Smokeless Fire," which is as good a definition of Faerie-nature as any. Most Easterners believe that the shape in which they are most like to see a Djinni is as a desert whirlwind, or a water-spout at sea, and indeed, those are fine, dramatic ways for a brash Djinni to fly. Which said, however, they may have other appearances.

Despite their shape-changing, Djinn do have particular forms in which they habitually rest. Some, like Europan Faerie Animals, take four-footed shapes, but that's too inconvenient and undignified for most. Others adopt human form, which their breed sees as a sign of refinement. (It is not that they find humanity especially handsome, but on the one hand, creating a disguise that humans themselves will believe is proof of skill, while on the other, the Djinn appreciate human creativity and wit, and practice in the art of human shape-taking hints that a Djinni is a versatile aesthetic sophisticate.) Thus, one may hear of Djinn lovers of either sex, oft times unrecognised at first; one may also recall the Arabian Nights tale in which the hero is ferried across a lake by a Djinn with the head of an elephant and the body of a lion, to meet a whole horde of monstrous Djinn -- whose king alone resembles a handsome young man.

However, even some lowly Djinn are capable of passing for human, which can be useful, especially if they have to work in human society. Some are prone to a particular error; their eyes open and close sideways, instead of up-and-down. Others are more traditional, and take a bipedal, two-armed shape with a few embellishments; green skin, great size, lengthy fangs or claws, glowing eyes, or other such fripperies.

Constraints Upon Djinn-Kind

On occasion, the Djinn show some of the same arbitrary problems as Europan elf-kind, such as "marriage prohibitions," or a hatred of the smell of sulphur. However, they have two great limits; the Faerie dread of iron, and the peculiar binding laid by Solomon.

Djinn and Metal

Mr Lane tells us: "To defend themselves from a Jinee . . . the Arabs often exclaim, 'Iron! Iron!' . . . or 'Iron! thou unlucky!'"

Like other Faerie, the Djinn are vulnerable to iron, and may indeed be deterred by the mere threat of the stuff. However, they are a sturdy folk, and rarely greatly hurt by the mere presence of the plain metal, if they have cause to remain. Nonetheless, a blow from a Cold Iron sword will likely slay 'em. If they choose to wield weapons, they disdain the fine silver of Europan Faerie-rapiers, thinking it flimsy and frivolous; they prefer a kind of brass of their own alloying, which is hard as all but the best steels. (My dwarven friends mutter that it's brittle.) This stuff polishes up well, too, and glows in the Arabian sun.

The Gifts of Solomon ben David

Of Solomon, Mr. Lane obtained tales:

No man ever obtained such absolute power over the Jinn as Suleymn Ibn Dood . . . This he did by virtue of a most

wonderful talisman . . . a seal-ring . . . partly composed of brass and partly of iron. With the brass he stamped his written commands to the good Jinn; with the iron . . . those to the evil Jinn . . . Over both orders he had unlimited power . . .

The Seal of Solomon is not *simply* the six-pointed "Star of David" that serves as a Jewish emblem; the full seal is surrounded and embellished by inscriptions and invocations. These were, of course, originally written in Hebrew; today, they are as likely to be Arabic, and work no less for that, thanks to the efforts of Arabian wizardry. (Magister Morrolan is attempting, as an exercise, to recreate 'em in modern English or German; ask me not how he proposes to test his translation.)

To some Djinn, Solomon gave imprisonment in brass bottles; to others, he gave Iron Bracelets. These are marked with his seal, and the Djinn is bound, not only to retain them, but to avoid any attempt to remove them. They seem to be a form of parole, imposed on the less *actively* evil Djinn, especially Jann; their effect is to prevent the Djinn from changing its form, or most uses of the power of Etherealness. The small quantity of plain iron does not cause the wearer actual injury by its presence (and the Djinn becomes accustomed to the unceasing sense of wrongness it induces).

Most important of all, Solomon left a basic teaching of his Lore, which remains known to practically every wizard in Islamic lands. This is one reason why the Djinn are far less of a nuisance to human-kind than might be expected.

Religion and the Djinn

It is not my policy to pass comment on human religion. 'Tis no secret that some of the Faerie turn away in fear from its trappings, from the Cross, or the tolling of a church bell -- but a human free-thinker would doubtless note that there are Faerie who'll turn and flee from a coat turned insides-out, or from salt. Think what you will. If we don't, as a rule, join you in church of a Sunday, assume nothing of our morality.

In the lands of the Djinn, though, things are different again. Most of the Ghuls, and many o' the servant-class, flee the prayers of a Moslem. (It should be noted that this is a religion with no great love of "Holy Symbols" or pictures; to the Moslem, the Word is all-important.) More potent evil Djinn -- Ifrit -- will disregard such things, though I doubt they'll happily lay hands upon the written Koran; they see themselves as blasphemers, and glory in it. Others, though, take a very different view; they treat the words of Islam with respect, for they are good Moslems.

If this seems surprising -- well, forgive me one remark on human faiths here; Islam is tolerantly all-encompassing, in its own way. Those as will speak the Avowal of the Faith are Moslems yet, whatever their birth. If Djinn will swear to being Moslems, the Faithful will not dare gainsay 'em.

But these are *not* the Djinn a human is most like to meet. Being Moslem, and thus dedicated to virtue, they refrain from murder and Ghul-habits, and they also feel that it would be unkind for them to wander 'mongst the "Sons of Adam." They have their own mosques, underground, or in distant wilderness, and they see no need to share those of humans. It would be, they say, an unmerciful thing to walk amongst humankind, where their nature provokes fear. Apart from which, human sorcerers are forever trying to enslave 'em, and resisting that may involve 'em in actions they don't enjoy.

Still, if you meet such, treat 'em with courtesy and you'll avoid trouble. Invoke a Moslem prayer, and they'll nod in agreement, and salute you as a co-religionist, but not be driven off.

There's one other matter to mention here. The Lord of the Unseelie is, o' course, named The Adversary. Now, there have been faiths in the East who've believed in One God, who was faced and opposed by a great foe; the Moslems call that foe Iblis, the Christians, Satan. Others have talked of such a being as, simply, the Adversary. Well, the Unseelie's chief was never a fallen angel or servant of the Almighty, but he's not short of diabolical malice. If he's become confused with something in human scriptures, it might serve his purposes, or just amuse him.

Game Notes: At least three out of four Ghuls and half of non-Moslem Djinn Servants will be driven away by an

avowal of the Moslem faith; if in doubt, the Host can cut the cards to decide. The words must sound sincere; this might work for a non-Moslem who's practised the formula -- Richard Burton swears it saved his neck once or twice -- but if nothing else, it's disrespectful of others' beliefs; passing Moslems may take offence, or suggest that, having claimed the protection of Islam, you should continue to obey the rules of the faith.

As to whether Christian symbols can be effective against Djinn, even Auberon isn't sure. In theory, they might be; if it's the mere symbolism that carries the power, well, they're symbols, and if it's the religion itself, remember that Moslems see Christ as an authentic prophet. It may literally be a matter of convincing the Djinn that this is holy -- presenting it strongly while making the point in words, loud and clear. This is best left as a matter of the Host's judgement and good roleplaying.

Djinn in Play

Tom Olam's Comments

Extracting the above from Auberon cost me two good bottles of Hungarian Tokai and a night recounting stories from my side of the Faerie Veil. (Thank heaven for old movie plots.) My worry here is to translate it into game terms.

The Djinn (like any Faerie) require a little care in the handling for hosts; they are both extremely powerful and peculiarly vulnerable. Their classic, ***Arabian Nights*** role is not as simple monsters to be fought; it is as plot devices and components of puzzles. For example, in the tale of "The Fisherman and the Djinni," the Djinni is released by accident, proposes to slaughter the human fisherman out of hand, but succumbs to trickery -- after which, it provides favors that enable the fisherman to make his fortune. Similarly, in the tale of Aladdin, the Djinni makes the hero rich and important -- but the interest of the story lies in Aladdin's relationship with the princess and her family, while the humor comes from the moments when the Djinni cuts loose at full power, and from Aladdin's mother's reactions.

Conversely, if you want to use Djinn as monsters, make sure that the Dramatic Characters are up to the fight. In the Arabian Nights, there is at least one very spectacular shape-shifting duel between a sorceress and an Ifrit, while in Bedouin folklore, Ghuls serve the same function as Ogres in Europa -- formidable opponents for tough and clever heroes. A wizard who has studied the lore of Solomon can make a huge difference; a quest-style plot for Europan characters might involve a Djinni who is too powerful to confront at first, forcing a wizard to search out spells to restrain it.

Djinn Powers

As Faerie, all Djinn have the standard Abilities of Etherealness and Glamour (see ***Castle Falkenstein,*** p.160-161), and also Shapeshifting if the game is using ***The Memoirs of Auberon of Faerie*** (see p.14-16 in that book); they also have "Kindred Powers" of their own. As habitual shape-shifters, they often have Good or better ratings in the relevant power -- unless currently obliged to wear Iron Bracelets, which restrict them to effectively Poor Etherealness and Shapeshifting, and make them unable even to become liquid or to reach through walls. Above-Average Glamour is rarer, usually being restricted to Djinn Lords.

Other Djinn Powers:

Be Unseen: As for the Fetch (***Castle Falkenstein,*** p.174). This Ability is popular with benevolent Djinn, especially Moslem believers, who prefer to perform the Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca undisturbed by startled humans.

Perform a Great Work: As for the Brownie (***Castle Falkenstein,*** p.174). An Ability typically possessed by minor Djinn Servants.

Know Mortal Desire: This is primarily a Ghul ability; Ifrit also use it (more subtly). It involves the ability to probe a mortal mind, and determine what the victim loves or desires; the Djinn then uses Shapeshifting or Glamour to mimic the desired thing. Match the Djinn's level in this Ability against the victim's Perception; a success for the Djinn attracts

the victim, and a High success will often overcome all logic and sense, at least for a moment.

As a rule, Poor Ability in this will only discern the most basic form of the victim's desires; food, a partner of the appropriate sex, the admiration of others, and so on. Average Ability finds some details, such as a taste for romance with blondes, or a fondness for fruit. Good Ability will pick up subtleties; preferred physique in a partner, or a specific area of vanity. Great Ability detects what the subject *most* desires -- the smell of fresh cardamom-scented coffee, or an image of some first love who has haunted the person's deepest dreams. An Exceptional rating means that the Djinn extracts many clear details, perhaps surprising or even disgusting the victim, if they ever have the chance to think about the things that were displayed to them. A Djinn with Extraordinary ability is frankly cruel, even if they mean well; a human who sees that which they display is rarely happy with real life, ever again.

Obtain from Elsewhere: This Ability gives the Djinn the power to obtain goods or materials from elsewhere in reality, and present them to whoever asks. (Technically, this might be theft, but it's very hard to detect or prove; many Djinn appear to know of great hordes of "lost" treasure, reducing the potential for embarrassment.) Of course, a Djinn with flight powers might achieve the same result, but with this power, the Djinn doesn't have to move (except possibly extra-dimensionally -- leave that question to metaphysicians). Note one limitation; the Djinn might obtain almost anything, but it has to already exist, somewhere in the world.

With Poor Ability, a Djinni can find general categories of item that are commonplace in the near vicinity, and will fit in one hand; loose change, a little food or drink of an unspecified kind, or a knife, say, and the fetching requires an hour or two. With Average Ability, the goods can be a little more specific, and the Djinni's "reach" extends for several hundred miles; thus, the beneficiary can request a hot meal, coffee, silver coins, or a plain sword, all within ten minutes or so. At the Good level, the power can obtain items in two or three minutes, and they can be almost any common thing that might be located on the same continent and that can be carried two-handed; a bag of gold coins, a fine meal or an impressive sword, or a gun. (Djinn of lesser power find requests for "high-tech" items confusing, and rarely obtain the desired results; any Djinni is likely to be hopelessly bemused by over-specific requests for modern products.) Great Ability is the minimum required to obtain living animals, or anything else that may be moving around unpredictably; otherwise, it can obtain most items that can be seen publicly somewhere in the world and lifted by normal human strength, in about a minute. With Exceptional Ability, the Djinni can produce rare and exotic items of no more than human size in a few seconds. At the Extraordinary level, the Ability can instantly find pretty well any item, even if it is unique, provided that it could pass through a doorway.

Survive and Endure: Most Djinn can use Etherealness to adopt a form that can survive in any environment, but many also have this Ability, which enables their physical bodies to adapt to environments that should roast, drown, or crush them. (The Djinni will probably prefer more normal conditions -- but this can be a matter of whim, and some enjoy swimming in boiling oil.) It cannot be used to resist injury from attacks, which use "shock" effects -- just to survive continuing conditions. It is absolutely no use against the effects of iron.

At the Poor level, it permits the Djinni, in human-like form, to wander through the arctic or the tropics in the same clothes without discomfort, or to remain underwater for several minutes. Average Ability means that the Djinni looks comfortable in any conditions that a human can endure for brief periods, and can breathe water like a fish. With Good Ability, the Djinn faces arctic blizzards with equanimity, sees a vat of boiling oil as a bath, and doesn't have to bother about oxygen. At the Great Level, this Ability lets the Djinni live in a baker's oven, breathing the flames and nibbling the hot charcoal, or stroll around on the floor of the deepest sea. With Exceptional Ability, the Djinni can live full-time in a vat of molten steel or liquid nitrogen, or survive the pressures in the centre of the Earth. At the Extraordinary level, the Ability would permit the Djinni to travel for years through the vacuum of space and walk on the surface of the sun, or dive to its heart.

Swift Flight: Many Djinn (mostly nobles and messengers) are even faster in flight than their Etherealness would imply, and can fly in fully solid form (always useful when carrying mortals around), unlike many Faerie who must become mist-like or shape-change into a bird to achieve full speed. This Ability grants flying speed appropriate to its level (see ***Castle Falkenstein,*** p.140), and the Djinni can triple its movement rate in straight lines over long distances, out of combat. (For example, a Djinni with Good Swift Flight can manage 300 mph for long-distance travel purposes.)

Typical Djinn Abilities

Note: "Swordsmanship" is the Eastern counterpart of Fencing, renamed here for aesthetic reasons.

Ifrit

Athletics Good, Charisma Good, Courage Good, Etherealness Great, Fisticuffs Good, Glamour Good, Know Mortal Desire Good, Physique Exceptional, Shapeshifting Good, Survive and Endure Great, Swift Flight Great, Swordsmanship Great, Tinkering Poor.

"Friendly" Noble

Athletics Good, Be Unseen Great, Charisma Good, Courage Great, Etherealness Great, Obtain from Elsewhere Average, Perception Good, Physique Great, Shapeshifting Good, Survive and Endure Great, Swift Flight Great, Swordsmanship Good.

Djinni Lady

Charisma Good, Comeliness Great, Courage Good, Etherealness Good, Glamour Great, Know Mortal Desire Great, Obtain From Elsewhere Good, Perception Great, Performance Good, Physician Good, Shapeshifting Great, Stealth Good, Survive and Endure Average.

(This is a type of Djinniya -- female Djinni -- which appears in number of Eastern stories; attractive, intelligent, and tending more to subtlety than raw force. Some of these "Ladies" are good-natured and helpful, or may feature in "romantic" tales for male audiences; others are more likely to appear in the worst sort of paranoid male fantasy. The *Peri* of Persia can be treated as equivalent to various Europan female Faeries.)

Jann (Djinni Servant)

Athletics Good, Comeliness Poor, Etherealness Average, Fisticuffs Great, Glamour Poor, Physique Great, Shapeshifting Average, Survive and Endure Average, Tinkering Poor, plus one of the following at Great level: Perform a Great Work, Obtain From Elsewhere, Swift Flight, or Swordsmanship. Reduce Etherealness and Shapeshifting to Poor if the Djinni wears Iron Bracelets.

Ghul

Athletics Good, Etherealness Poor, Fisticuffs Good, Glamour Poor, Know Mortal Desire Good, Perception Good, Physique Great, Shapeshifting Average, Stealth Good, Survive and Endure Poor.

Djinn Dramatic Characters

*Note: Djinn are powerful beings, and should only be played as Dramatic Characters with the Host's specific, considered permission -- but a skilled player **could** take the part of a minor Djinni, who need not be any more powerful or game-unbalancing than a Dragon or a Daoine Sidhe.*

You are a Djinni. Not one of the Lords, to be sure, but a little above the run of Jann. You have enough initiative to go out and have adventures on your own. You may be an aristocratic hanger-on, or a superior sort of servant -- distinctions are blurred.

Perhaps you have recently been released from a prison closed with the Seal of Solomon. Of course, you were never malicious enough for that wise human king to think you should be put away -- but other human wizards have not always applied his lore with as much justice. Or perhaps you served an evil Ifrit in Solomon's time, and when Solomon

defeated your master, he recognised that you were not truly evil, but bound your power with Iron Bracelets as a punishment for serving evil. Now, you sometimes look at them, remember why they are there, and wander the world seeking to redeem yourself.

Then again, perhaps you are simply a masterless sort, who has lived for the past few centuries in some remote ruin. Now, you have decided to go a-wandering once more. Or perhaps you normally live in an organised community with others of your kind, and it's some duty that has led you to have dealings with the Sons of Adam. In that case, you should be careful how you act; on the one hand, you don't want to frighten anyone, and on the other, you don't want some nervous sorcerer trapping you in a brass bottle for a thousand years!

Strong Suits: Etherealness, Perception, Physique.
Faerie Power: Choose one from the list above. Alternatively, choose two, but neither may be taken at better than Average power. Note the effect of Iron Bracelets, if worn.
Possessions: Baggy silk trousers; heavy silver jewellery; a scimitar of Djinn Brass.
In Your Diary: Notes on the strange ways that the world has changed in recent years; snippets of information on the world beyond your homeland (humans are travelling further and faster these days!); philosophical thoughts on the nature of human and Djinn desire.
Why You're Here: If you were recently released from imprisonment, perhaps it was one of these modern folk who released you, and you have sworn to accompany and aid them for as long as it takes to pay this debt -- or perhaps you have an ancient vow to accomplish, and these humans are going to same way. On the other hand, perhaps you were never trapped, but are a good Moslem who has recently discovered a vile plot by some Ifrit, which these folk are opposing, and you feel it is your duty to oppose such evil. (Or you could simply have gone on the Hajj pilgrimage, invisible or disguised as a human, and then decided to see some more of the world while you are out and about.)

Then again, perhaps it is simply the old problem; boredom. You may be a lesser relative of the Djinn aristocracy, tired of the Faerie Veil -- even in the lush, exotically oriental form into which your kind shape it -- and you are determined to search out new experiences in the mortal world. In that case, you may well feel that these Farangi have more new and exciting ways of thinking and acting than the conservative folk of the Ottoman Empire. But who needs a reason? You are a Djinni! Now, what do humans mean by that word, "whimsical"?

Banestorming Infinity Unlimited

Yrth (and more) as Alternate Earths

by J. Hunter Johnson

Art by Fredd Gorham

The ***GURPS*** line, true to its universal name, has multiple ways to get from one dimension to another. You can take a parachronic conveyor or projector from ***Time Travel,*** get caught in the Banestorm and be deposited on Yrth from ***Fantasy,*** use a gate as described in ***Grimoire*** or ***Time Travel*** (perhaps creating the gate with a silver rod pulled from a random box in ***Warehouse 23,)*** ride the Merry-Go-Round or the Rift Raft from ***Magic Items 2,*** cross the Dimensional Bridge from ***Callahan's Crosstime Saloon,*** inexplicably find yourself in The Hole from *Pyramid #1*, or do it yourself, using the World-Jumper advantage from ***Time Travel*** or the Plane Shift spell from ***Grimoire.*** Dreams can also take you, willingly or not, to the Dreamlands (***Cthulhupunk***) or the Dream World (***Voodoo***). Or a quick walk across the ***Illuminati University*** campus would probably do the trick.

Pretty impressive list, eh?

In many campaigns, having multiple dimensions is sufficient complication without having multiple ways to get there and back again. But then there are the GMs (and players!) who want a more labyrinthine stomping ground.

Twisting Infinite Worlds

The Infinite Worlds campaign setting from ***GURPS Time Travel*** sets up its primary conflict by limiting parachronic travel to just two timelines, Homeline and Centrum (or Us and Them). But if the GM wants more than just the Big Two power struggle, she can add other dimension-hopping camps from the available ***GURPS*** sources. This is such a campaign setting. The power players on the timeline scale are (get your score cards ready) Homeline and Centrum from ***Time Travel,*** Yrth from ***Fantasy,*** the world of ***International Super Teams,*** Shikaku-mon from ***Alternate Earths,*** and Merlin from ***Technomancer***.

Another pretty impressive list, eh? But don't worry about it being daunting. It all comes together below.

Homeline (current year 2021)

Homeline parachronic scientists have reached Merlin (the "Soulburner" adventure in ***Time Travel Adventures*** has already taken place) and Shikaku-mon. Shikaku-mon was a Research-class timeline until they began their own parachronic missions. Homeline has since relaxed restrictions on travel to Shikaku-mon. Merlin has been Research-class since its discovery.

They also know that the Yrth timeline exists through the efforts of one of their world-jumpers, Ed Gruberman. Gruberman patiently tried to locate hundreds of different myth parallels, finding Nottingham and Mermaid-1 early enough (in Homeline 2002) to keep up his spirits through the many failures. After going through scores of fairy tales,

novels, and movie concepts, Gruberman tried a couple of settings from role-playing games. In 2004, he succeeded with the world of the International Supers Teams (which the Infinity Council calls Krypton, after Superman's homeworld). He returned from Krypton almost immediately, after reading the Times' front page articles about the U.S. superteam's hostage rescue mission in Iran. His second game world success was Yrth, where he found his world-jumping abilities nonfunctional. He managed to leave Yrth after only 14 months (being chased by Megalan mages most of this time) by finding the Rift Raft (p. MIT110) in Sahud, owned by a descendent of Ikito the World-Dreamer. Naturally, the Rift Raft did not take him directly back to Homeline, but he was able to world-jump back to Homeline from the new world. Gruberman's long absence is the reason Infinity Unlimited is no longer willing to risk world-jumpers on blind jumps (see sidebar p. TT100).

Gruberman's current theory on those myth timelines is that Steve Jackson must have been caught in the Banestorm and managed to research the Plane Shift (Homeline) spell himself in order to return and develop the world as a setting for his new game, and that Bob Schroeck was probably a latent psychic, able to see the IST world subconsciously.

Infinity Unlimited has been trying to find the mathematical settings for both worlds ever since.

Incidentally, Gruberman was right about Schroeck. Steve Jackson, however, is actually one of the Dark Elves responsible for the Banestorm. When the cataclysm occurred, many of the elves were thrown across the 8 dimensions. Steve alone ended up on Homeline, nearly a millennium ago. Homeline's Steve Jackson Games never published ***GURPS Time Travel*** or any of its supplements, so Ed Gruberman never had to face any temporal paradoxes.

Centrum (current year 2021)

Centrum knows nothing of Yrth, Merlin, or Shikaku-mon; they are unreachable by Centrum's parachronic conveyors, and no travelers from those timelines have shown up in Centrum. They do, of course, know of Homeline, but can't make the trip there directly. Krypton is a different story . . .

Centrum's first foray into Quantum 6 happened to be to the world of the IST, in Centrum year 1992. They were very intrigued, but they were frustrated at the difficulty in reaching Krypton. This led them to their first attempts to move a timeline to a closer Quantum. They succeeded in 2005 (Krypton year 1981) when a Centrum-placed bomb killed Anwar Sadat and several of his metahuman bodyguards (p. IST98), an event that caused Krypton to jump to Quantum 7. (This shift, within a year after Gruberman discovered this world for Homeline, is why Homeline has not found the settings for the IST timeline -- they are looking in the wrong Quantum!)

The shift was not without consequence, however. It seems to have caused a domino effect, displacing a timeline from Quantum 7, which displaced a world from Quantum 8, and so on. No further shifts were attempted until a group of rogue agents caused the atomic destruction of London in an echo timeline (p. TT88). Seeing the results of the shift (which caused no domino effect) led Centrum scientists to make new shift attempts on other echo timelines.

Since Krypton is the only world with native parachronic capability that Centrum can reach, Centrum is actively working to establish good relations with the Kryptonian U.N., with some success. Centrum parachronic scientists are already working on a plan to shift the timeline back to Quantum 6 in case they are able to "set up shop" on Krypton. They will then be in position to confront Homeline more easily! The domino effect is less of a concern, since the shift is away from Centrum.

Yrth (current year 1997)

The Banestorm that resulted from the Dark Elves' disastrous attempt to destroy the orcs of Yrth does not just pluck creatures from other worlds. It also reaches to other dimensions to snare beings from other timelines as well. The concept of Quanta that limits the reach of Infinity Unlimited's parachronic conveyors (and World Jumpers) does not hinder the Banestorm.

Most of the incoming stuff brought by the Banestorm comes from Homeline (see Technobabble below). The people of Yrth do not call it "Homeline", of course, and neither do most of the people from Homeline. To them, it is simply

"Earth".

The Banestorm does occasionally bring beings from other worlds as well. There were at least three transferences from Gabrook and one from Loren'dil (p. F8), which the Ytarrians realize were different worlds from Earth. But some of the transfers came from other Earth-like timelines (including Centrum!). Most Ytarrians have no way of realizing that the people from one of these timelines are not from Homeline, and neither do the people themselves. They all come from Earth as far as they can tell. Sometimes two Earthlings will disagree on this or that fact about their homeworld, but it is usually dismissed as part of the Banestorm effect or as simply unimportant given their new surroundings. Sahud, in particular, has collected people from many different timelines. This has contributed to the peculiarity of their culture.

Some Megalan sorcerers have figured out more of the truth. The Ministry of Serendipity kept finding more and more contradictions in their "Liber Terranum Primus" (p. F9) until they finally concluded that there must be more than one Earth. The Ministry's sorcerers know of only one version of the Plane Shift spell, Plane Shift (Merlin). And they know that one only because a mage from Merlin passed on the information (unwillingly) before being allowed to return. They believe they are close to success with Plane Shift (Homeline). The Ministry of Serendipity now has the Rift Raft, which they took from Ikito's family upon its return. Many of Ikito's descendants were killed by Ministry agents, but perhaps not all.... The Ministry of Serendipity could soon find themselves embroiled in a Sahudese low war (p. F99).

The Jesuits of Yrth (p. F27) are also secretly capable of traveling to other Timelines -- most often to Shikaku-mon where they can "talk shop" with the Japanese Jesuits (p. AE72). The Jesuit mages researched Plane Shift (Shikaku-mon) themselves, but had an easier time with it since any Jesuits that were taken from Shikaku-mon by the Banestorm usually found their own way to the Society's church in Megalos. The mages had an abundance of information about the timeline that they were trying to reach.

Yrth shares some features with Coventry (p. TT105). Parachronic travel to Yrth by conveyor or world-jumping ability is possible, but leaving Yrth by those non-magical methods is not. This could be another effect of the Banestorm or just a natural phenomenon.

Shikaku-mon (current year 2021)

The weird cyberpunk/prep world of Shikaku-mon has taken in the sudden ability to hop dimensions without batting an eye. The peoples of Shikaku-mon had been quite accustomed to the internal quadripolar balance maintained on their world, and having a few more external, infrequent players didn't seem to matter much to the common man. Homeline, Merlin, and occasionally Yrth factions just made up more of the sociodynamic (p. AE77).

Some of Shikaku-mon's movers and shakers feel that the balance of power might be disturbed by these external forces, making the threat of a "Last War" a little more real. The powers of mages from Yrth and Merlin are harder for the nations of Shikaku-mon to gauge, but they are tempered by Shikaku-mon's low mana level. (And some of the governments are working on making their capitals no mana zones to further reduce the risk.)

At first, several different Brazilian multinational corporations tried to gain sole possession of parachronic technology; it is not even clear which corporation developed (or stole from failed Homeline missions) the technology first. Industrial espionage was (and is) rampant, and when the dust settled, the Brazilians found that the Kingdom of France had added parachronics to its list of dominated areas. After a brief round of finger-pointing, many of the multinationals now admit (at least to themselves) that having the technology in France might be for the best. They could get back to their regular business and let the French set the standards for the new technology, which wouldn't be any harder to steal later than their computer technology.

The Japanese and Swedish empires are also content to let France have the commercial success of time tours, mining operations, etc. They developed their own government programs for parachronic operations with the public eye conveniently distracted. All of the Shikaku-mon powers pay lip service to secrecy regulations to avoid reprisals from Infinity Unlimited. They are not, however, above killing people during a parachronic mission.

The Japanese Empire interacts primarily with the Jesuit mages on Yrth, while the Swedish Empire views itself as allied

with Merlin. The Holy See is busy trying to address the perceived heresies of the Conclave of Archbishops on Yrth and the Holy See of Merlin. The most glaring of these is the view that the practice of magic is not a sin.

Homeline, resigned to the presence of parachronics on Shikaku-mon, has tried to keep its interactions neutral, although each of the four Shikaku-mon powers feels as if it is being slighted in favor of the others. France, in particular, often argues with the Infinity Council over mining rights to Empty timelines.

Merlin (current year 1997)

Since the initial encounter with other timelines in the "Soulburner" adventure, the Pentagon on Merlin has wasted no time. Manadynamics' parachronic devices, as with everything else, are a mix of magic and science. They are even more cautious than Homeline in their use of these devices, since dropping in on a no-mana timeline would be problematic. There is a handful of tech-only, "scout"-type parachronic vehicles for handling some of these tricky situations.

The U.S. on Merlin is quite distrustful of Yrth, after having one of their citizens abducted and forced to reveal the details of the Plane Shift (Merlin) spell. Both Delta Force and the Necromantic Operations Command are now prepared to handle any further problems, and there are even some preparations for fending off an invasion from Yrth, if it comes to that. They really have no idea what to expect, since the Megalan sorcerers were not big on explanations. The Pentagon has assumed that the prowess of magic on Yrth rivals that on Merlin -- an over-estimate, to be sure. Yrth mages do not have sentient Crays to aid spell research.

The mageocratic government of Surinam is a little more forgiving of Yrth's "indiscretions". Some researchers in Surinam secretly work with some members of the College of Necromancy in Megalos, and others with some members of the Dark Elf Cult (p. F37).

The U.S. government is happy to work with Infinity Unlimited, although they are a bit skeptical about the whole "Centrum" thing that Homeline keeps mentioning (but they scanned Russian communiques for any mention of Centrum anyway). Just as Infinity has classified Merlin as Research, the Department of Defense has classified all timelines as Top Secret.

The U.S. is also in a comfortable relationship with the Swedish Empire on Shikaku-mon; both parties are feigning forthrightness while trying to hold back as much "leverage" as possible.

The Pentagon may also have other contacts too far "downstream" for Homeline to reach; the Russians may have secretly contacted (or been contacted by) timelines unknown.

Krypton (current year 1997)

The U.N. of Krypton is corrupt! (See pp. IST59 and TT97.) It's still no Evil Empire, but it is no utopian power either. They do maintain their authority through carefully veiled repression, and they are certainly not above increasing their power by manipulating new resources, such as those from other timelines.

But all that does not change the day-to-day lives of most of the metahumans, who are blissfully unaware of the U.N.'s motives. Most of the metahumans are also blissfully unaware that other timelines exist. Other planets, sure, aliens, no problem, but other dimensions are simply not considered. Perhaps some metahumans (or even normals) do consider the

possibility, or they might have even come into contact with people from other timelines, but they have no recollection of these ideas and events. How curious....

The U.N. council members do know about other timelines. They are negotiating with Centrum, after all. The U.N. has one World-Jumper on staff, but she can carry less than 30 lbs. with her on each jump. Krypton would like to have the technology to carry more. Centrum wants to have a sanctioned presence on Krypton (and access to U.N. research on metahumanity), and Krypton wants access to Centrum parachronic technology. Negotiations are likely to go on for a long time.

Unbeknownst to the U.N., one of their IST Brasilia members, Karasu, is also a world jumper. Karasu has power over darkness, but he also emerges from the darkness he creates carrying whatever equipment is most useful to the job at hand. He doesn't even realize the extent of his world-jumping abilities; he simply knows that he can pop over to his own personal holding area (an Empty timeline, p. TT88) where he's accumulated quite a stash of useful items, and pop back.

Krypton-2, the "good" IST world, remains undiscovered. This is the dimension Bob Schroeck was able to see most clearly.

Technobabble

The set of timelines subjected to the Banestorm depends on a subset of the numbers that determine a world's T-Gamma force (see sidebars on pp. TT85-86). The eruption of the Banestorm did alter Yrth's own T-Gamma numbers and caused it to change Quantum numbers. Yrth now resides in Quantum 5, just like Homeline.

Yrth and Homeline also have identical values for the "Banestorm subset" of the T-Gamma number, which is probably why almost all abductions have been from Homeline Earth. The subset numbers of Gabrook are closer than Loren'dil's to Yrth's -- which is why Gabrook had three major transfer periods, while Loren'dil had only one. Similarly, Shikaku-mon's numbers are closer than Merlin's, which is why more Jesuits from Shikaku-mon come over than Chimera from Merlin. The kidnappings seem to be tied as much to time coordinates as T-Gamma numbers, so other worlds can (and probably have been) hit as well. Humans taken from close parallels before those worlds diverged will be indistinguishable from Homeline humans on Yrth.

Homeline has not been able to deduce the mathematical settings needed to make the jump to Yrth. The addition of the Banestorm acts like a new element of the T-Gamma number, unaccounted for in Homeline's computations.

There are a few people on the different timelines who have noticed that each known timeline capable of parachronic travel has a present year of either 2021 or 1997. No one has yet found it important enough to try to explain.

Tweaking and Debugging

This setting has a lot of room for variation. If six power players seems to be too many, some can be dropped while still leaving plenty of opportunity for adventuring. Or if it's not twisted enough, more timelines can be given dimension-hopping capability (***Conan, Terradyne, Wild Cards, Illuminati University, Time Travel's*** United States of Lizardia, ***Alternate Earth's*** Reich-5 or *Pyramid #15's* Technate, Macedonia-Weird, Trotsky, Kirby or Spacenixon, for instance; if you decide to introduce a Georgian-era parachronic conveyor to the world of ***Goblins,*** more power to you).

Even the timelines discussed can be doctored a bit. Yrth does not have to be a Quantum-5 world. The GM can determine which Quantum will contain Yrth by considering on which timelines she wants to be able to reach Yrth by parachronic projector. For example, if Yrth is in Quantum 2, it would be unreachable by either Homeline or Centrum, but theoretically reachable by timelines in Quanta 4 or less if "native" working conveyors can be built. This seems likeliest for Shikaku-mon, Reich-5, or perhaps Merlin. Coincidentally, they are all Quantum 3 timelines.

World-jumpers would be able to reach Yrth (eventually) in whichever Quantum it is placed. These world-jumpers might work for Infinity, or they might be metahumans from ***IST*** (see p. TT97) or just gifted individuals for other

timelines. The main hurdle would be for the first person making the first jump to Yrth. The jumper would have to have the "New worlds" enhancement, be in the same Quantum as Yrth or an adjacent Quantum, and make the jump with a large penalty for the difference between Yrth and whatever worlds he's experienced.

GURPS Tredroy (p. 48) hinted at a cross-dimensional trading company operated by Infinity Unlimited's White Star branch (p. TT98). If parachronic devices will not work on Yrth, then this House of the White Star is simply an eccentric and secretive merchant house, and the name similarity is just a coincidence. Alternately, it could be replaced with a Chili Wizard fast food franchise based out of Merlin.

A Cold Night in Dashgad

An adventure for Traveller
By M.J. Dougherty and Neil Frier
Art by Lance S. Winkel

Introduction

This adventure is set in Milieu 0, although it can easily be transplanted to a different setting. It is Year 8 of the Third Imperium when the characters arrive on Dashgad (Core/0603), a frontier world on the very edge of the Imperium near the Apge Consortium, an economically-based Pocket Empire of eight worlds. Considerable trade from the Imperium passes through Apge, but Dashgad remains an undeveloped frontier.

Dashgad

The Dashgad system is unusually empty. Apart from the star and Dashgad, the only other major object is a large (252800km diameter) gas giant named Masia.

Masia is orbited by nine moons whose size codes range from 0 to 6, one of which is Dashgad. Only Dashgad has any atmosphere to speak of. It is this unassuming lump of rock which has been granted the rather grand title of Mainworld in the system.

Starport: C. Standard but for a lack of orbital facilities.

Size: 1. 2360 km diameter, with surface gravity of 0.37g

Population: 2. 632 people, of whom 596 live in the main settlement, Smit Town. The other 36 run Dashgoat ranches.

Government: 2. Participating Democracy. Every citizen aged 16 or over is entitled to vote via a computer network on all major policy decisions while the day-to-day running of the world is carried out by officers of the Imperial Colonial Office.

Law Level: 4. Dashgad is a young colony and its laws are few, leaving most legal decisions in the hands of the Imperial Ministry of Justice Marshal and his three deputies. Weapons which are neither military nor fully-automatic in nature are available at the world's "INSTORE". A wait of three days is mandatory while the IMJ computers run a check of your permit and any criminal status.

Tech Level: B. The average Imperial tech level reflects the investment in facilities by the ICO to create a port near the Apge Consortium. The world's citizens enjoy a high standard of living.

The climate of Dashgad is governed by four factors: the lack of water, the low gravity, the cold and the world's tainted atmosphere. Dashgad's taint is the gas mix which has a low oxygen content, which requires people outside of buildings to use compressor masks. The thin atmosphere and the shadow of the gas giant Masia result in a low average temperature, which even at the equator never rises above -4C. At night the temperature plunges to -17C. At the poles the cold is even more extreme. The world's climactic circumstances have resulted in much of the world being desert with no rainfall whatsoever.

The human colony on Dashgad has been build near the equator where the climate is merely extremely inhospitable. This has the drawback that most of the water on-planet is locked up in the two polar regions. The colonists have built large condensers to relieve their water shortage, and tapped underground sources to provide just enough to get by.

Low gravity (0.37g) also means that humans make a great deal of use of gravitics, with vehicles and buildings being equipped to provide a standard 0.7g internal environment. Not having access to sophisticated technology, the local flora and fauna (such as they are) have been shaped by the conditions

Flora And Fauna

The world has only two major forms of plant life: Stiltgrass and Green Weed. Green Weed is a ground-hugging creeper with sharp thorn-like leaves which grows in tangles between the rocks and hills of the uplands. As a plant, Green Weed has no value other than providing a little oxygen by photosynthesis.

Stiltgrass, however, stands 2 to 2.5 meters in height, with a typical stalk having a diameter of 30mm. Stiltgrass covers about 60% of the world's surface in gently-waving forests. Stiltgrass has little value except as food for the world's population of bizarre creatures named Dashgoats.

Dashgoats are the sole native animal life form which has achieved a mass greater than 1kg; they are the only life forms which do not avoid the cold by hiding among the Stiltgrass fronds.

Physically, the Dashgoat resembles a six-legged insect-like creature of 3m or so in height. They lead a simple life roaming the Stiltgrass forests in herds of several hundred, pausing to eat the Stiltgrass, then plodding mindlessly onwards. Dashgoats have no eyes, steering their sedate progress by means of sensitive pads on the leading pair of feet and legs. This lack of senses does not pose much of a problem to a creature which frequently moves as little as a few hundred metres in a day even when on the move. Dashgoat stampedes are not to be feared.

Once a suitable stand of Stiltgrass is located, the Dashgoat stands over the stalks and releases from its mouth (located on the underside of the body), an enzyme which begins to digest the grass. The Dashgoat then lowers its body over the stalks and over 2-3 days ingests the grass into its bladder, reducing the grass stalks down to a height of a meter or so.

Once the herd has eaten its fill, the Dashgoats will wander off into the uplands for 3-4 weeks in order to fully digest the grass.

Dashgoats reproduce asexually, by a form of natural cloning. Three times a year, each adult Dashgoat produces 4-6 eggs which grow on its back. Each egg grows into a clone of its parent, with the Dashkids eventually dropping off the parent into a clump of half-eaten Stiltgrass, where they begin their own lazy cycle of feeding and self-cloning. Dashkids reach maturity after about 2 years.

Imperial biologists still do not fully understand the Dashgoat life cycle, as research into the habits of this rather dull life form has not been given a high priority. Why the planet is not completely covered in Dashgoats standing end-to-end is still a mystery, as each animal produces 12-18 young each year after the age of 2, and lives for approximately 15 years. Some biologists believe that Dashgoat population reaches a critical level, with a die-back due to starvation following, in regular cycles. These cycles may have been interrupted by human ranching techniques. Only time and further study will tell.

Since the coming of humans to Dashgad, the Dashgoats are ranched, currently by some nine families who live on self-contained ranches in the Stiltgrass forest. The Dashgoats' eggs are removed using grav-harvesters twice a year. The eggs are then processed at the ranches into a dried powder which is sold offworld to pharmaceutical companies as the egg powder contains an excellent oxidizing agent.

Dashgoat

Grazer 150kg A1 F8 S3
Armor 1 20/15

Smit Town

Home to all of 596 people, or 94% of the world population, the town is centred around the world's small C class Starport.

The port itself has only a very limited orbital facility, consisting of 3 fixed-orbit satellites which can be used a mooring points for non-streamlined starships. A daily shuttle service is provided by the fleet of 3 launches which provide cargo handling and passenger services to the surface. The service is subsidized, with a nominal fee of Cr. 50 per trip payable for form's sake.

The Downport is a collection of 15 launch/landing pads each capable of handling a 400dt vessel. One pad however is very large and can handle 1000 dt. This pad is never used in practice, since large vessels tend to remain in orbit.

The pads are simple plasticrete structures with landing lights and connection points for auxiliary power, life support and drinking water. The connection is made by the ground crew within 3 hours of the ship landing.

Fuel is supplied on request by a grav-tanker, which is in turn supplied by a fuel shuttle, a custom-built vessel which is little more than a huge scoop which makes constant runs to and from the gas giant, delivering its skimmed fuel to the two underground holding tanks built some 60km from the Starport for safety reasons. While a ship must pay for fuel, it does save a 1.5 day journey to the gas giant, 8 hours skimming then the 18-hour drag (at 1g constant) out to the 100-diameter point.

The last structure on each landing pad is a small bunker which in fact houses a grav-lift, taking the visitor from the pad to Smit Town,, deep below the surface of the planet. A second large grav-lift is to be found in the bunker, along with grav pallets, allowing cargo transfer to take place.

The town is built entirely within custom-drilled caverns to protect the citizens from outside conditions, and allowing internal grav fields to provide a constant 0.7g, oxygen-enriched air and a day-night cycle of 12 hours each. A holographic sky-scape projected onto the cavern ceiling gives the impression of dawn, daylight, dusk, and full night.

The caverns themselves are quite tall, most being around 15m high. Buildings are cut into rock faces, though these are decoratively faced leaving no bare rock to be seen. Most buildings are 2 storeys high.

The main caverns feature guided walkways and small parks filled with native Sylean plants. grav lifts hover at about 6m above the floor and grav-stairs consist of a small staircase leading to a platform where a grav-life can be caught for journeys to various areas of the town. To operate, a verbal instruction is issued and the lift will then proceed directly to the destination.

The town itself is divided into three main sectors, all of which are linked via the main cavern.

The Residential Area has space for far more then the existing homes of the 596 inhabitants, ready for the expansion of the colony over the next few years. There is also a school and a small medical centre, and the Democratic Hall. This acts as a museum and library as well as a meeting hall, as most votes are cast via the computer network. The CPU which handles the votes is kept here, as are public records and such like.

The Shopping Mall is quite small, and is dominated by INSTORE, a department store which sells a limited selection of most goods from weapons to data pads.

Other stores include an Astroburger franchise, a Vibra-life cinema (as detailed in 101 Rendezvous, available from CORE), and the Emperor's Head, an expensive restaurant. There are no bars except those within the cinema and restaurant.

The third sector is the Port Sector, and contains the Colonial Broker Office, warehouses, a small ship's outfitters and the Dashgoat-egg packaging facilities.

The largest trading firm in the port is Pharmacologique Fabrique LIC, which has recently expanded its operation to

gain a 38% holding in the Dashgoat-egg industry. Some 34 people are employed here (5% of the population). The only other large company is Smit Holdings LIC, a family firm owned by a very minor noble house. Sir Hercule Smit now leaves most of the corporation's day to day running to Sara Smit, his daughter and heir. She has already invested heavily from company profits into local businesses, and Smit Holdings now own or have shares in virtually every enterprise on planet.

The Port sector also houses the town's powerplant, which provides power for grav plates, oxygen compressors and other energy needs. This installation still belongs to the Colonial Office, and is guarded by a squad of ICO troopers.

A Cold Night in Dashgad

1. Arrival

The characters arrive on Dashgad from the imperial Core, bringing cargo and dispatches from the ICO. While the exact set-up is left to the referee, the characters should be in possession of a Jump-2 starship such as a Far Trader or a Scout.

Arrival gives the bridge crew a good view of the huge gas giant Masia; its orange storm clouds forming a lurid backdrop to the tiny, drab rock which is Dashgad.

The trip in is fairly standard, with the ICO acting as port control checking the ship's transponder codes and finally giving clearance to land at Pad 7. The journey through the thin atmosphere is an easy task for any competent pilot and once landed the ground crew quickly arrive to collect the Cr. 50 berthing fee. Auxiliary power, life support and drinking water pipes are connected.

Once these routine events are completed the crew can deliver their dispatches in the form of a sealed datapad to the ICO as soon as possible. The referee can use the trip to the ICO to introduce the underground community that is Smit Town to the players.

2. The Imperial Colonial Office

The ICO building is quite impressive, being built directly opposite the Hall of Democracy. It follows classic Sylean pyramidal design, with its pinnacle touching the cavern's roof.

The outer surface is formed with "Black Glass", apart from a huge orange sunburst which sits above the ornate entrance to the building. Once inside, the characters are warmly welcomed and placed in a waiting lounge which contains light refreshments. After a short wait, an officer of the ICO arrives and introduces himself as Commander Sharrii Attarii. He inspects the data pads and then offers the agreed mail fee of cr. 5000.

Sharrii is a fairly young man on his first assignment and will offer to treat the crew to a meal at the Vibra-life cinema 'plex in exchange for offworld news and chat. He is, to put it bluntly, bored silly and desperate for some diversion from routine.

3. Vibralife Multiplex

The venue was devised and published by Andy and Sarah Lilly in the CORE publication "101 Rendezvous".

In a large cavern at the very edge of the shopping mall area is the Vibralife cinema. A hundred or so small spheres, all linked by tubular passageways, for a roughly cubical grid. Each sphere is emblazoned with the Vibralife long (A cube with a spring at its center)

A ground-level dome contains the reception area where the Cr. 10 tickets are purchased. Moving walkways convey

customers to a free dome where they are strapped into as frame which supports most of their weight. Each dome supports a single frame which can take one or two persons.

The desired film is then projected onto the interior of the dome and the frame moves, shakes, rotates etc to simulate the movement observed in the film.

Before the film begins, however, a series of adverts are displayed. One concerns a trading firm called Gabatith Haulage. The ad simply states that as the leading independent trader in Dashgoat egg powder and merchants interested should contact Gabatith on Net SSW 148.

If asked about them Sharrii can tell the characters that Gabatith operates a single trader but often uses freelancers to ship its goods, at a little above the going freighting rate.

Sharii will be an excellent host, and enjoys the characters' company. He buys them a meal in the cinema's small but well-stocked fast-food outlet, plus a few drinks afterwards.

4. Gabatith Haulage

The ad at the cinema should guide the group to the haulage firm. If not, they will soon find out that there is no other cargo to be had on a backwater world like this one. Unless the characters like shipping empty space, they will sooner or later end up talking to Gabatith.

Located in the port sector, the office is a small room built onto a large warehouse. In the office the characters will find John Fergy, the warehouse manager. John is pleased to see them as he has a freight consignment which requires transport to Apge.

John explains that the Gabatith trader has been held up and he has 30 tons of egg powder to be moved to Apge within 5 days if it is to arrive on time. He offers Cr. 1250 per ton, and will go as high as Cr. 1350 per ton if the cargo is shipped within 5 days.

However, the cargo needs collecting from the Parnaby ranch some 250 Km from the Conrad Plain. The company will provide a Hecules class Grav-truck on free loan (see Emperor's vehicles) which could make the journey there and back in 6 hours 36 minutes, and carry 2.5 dt on each trip (12 trips will be required).

With the limitations of the truck it is clear that trips must be made around the clock top ensure that the 5-day schedule can be met.

The ICO will not allow ships to land away from the starport due to the damage this might cause to the Stiltgrass forests.

5. The Parnaby Ranch

As Smit Town is built on the uplands, amid the boulders and Green Weed, the Conrad Plain is a surprise to the grav-truck crew as it is covered in tall Stiltgrass as far as the eye can see.

Amongst the grass, small herds of Dashgoats can occasionally be seen, eating or marching slowly towards the uplands to digest their meal.

After some 3 hours of flight, the truck crew sight the ranch. It is a simple cluster of four buildings, constructed on an artificial mound of earth to raise it clear of the grass. There is no fence or other outer limit, just an area clear of the Stiltgrass.

The Ranch House:

A 2-story building constructed of drab plasticrete, with large triple-glazed windows and an elaborately decorated but quite standard airlock, to preserve the home's oxygen-enriched atmosphere. The internal environment is kept comfortable by grav plates built into the floor and an excellent heating system.

Airlock: Large enough for four people to use at once, or to carry bulky objects through. Along the walls are racks for compressor masks and storage bays for spares, as well as several suits of outdoor clothing; warm oversuits and parkas.

Hall: A plain room dominated by a large 3D photo of the Imperial Palace. The hall is scattered with outdoor boots, old tools etc; it is the place where the "outside" ends and home begins, and incidentally a dumping-ground for anything which isn't to be immediately put away.

Corridor: A central "L" shaped corridor provides access ton the other rooms. The far end leads to the stairs.

Living Room: A large, well-appointed family room with 2 sofas and a large view-wall/window. A selection of homely clutter lies about the place, including slippers, half-full coffee mugs and grav-machinery journals.

Dining Room/Kitchen area: This room is divided into halves; one half contains simply a large imported wooden table and seven chairs, while the remaining space houses a standard TL B kitchen unit.

Storeroom: This small room is used to store supplies etc, and is also the point where the atmosphere conduits enter the home from the Compressor building.

The second storey is divided into four bedrooms and a large bathroom. The master bedroom is the largest, but all are of standard design, with built-in wardrobe space and furniture. There are enough beds to sleep five adults and two children.

Grav Garage

A converted starship cargo container serves as a garage for the ranch's vehicles; a grav truck and the harvester used for removing the eggs from the backs of the Dashgoat herds. The garage door is a simple alloy shutter raised by electric motors. It provides no protection from Dashgad's atmosphere.

Egg Drier

A small automated plant simply receives Dashgoat eggs from the hovering harvester, via an opening in its silo. Over a period of 18 hours it breaks, dries and packs the egg powder automatically.

The egg powder is stored at the base of the drier in 50kg packages.

Compressor Building

Built around a Fusion Plus power generator provided by the ICO, the building provides the ranch's energy needs, recharges the grav vehicles and powers the air compressors, which provide the house with breathable air via a conduit.

On arrival at the ranch, the characters are met by the ranch owner, John Parnaby, a strange figure in his compressor mask and multi-layered heatsuit.

John is in his late fifties, tough and self-reliant as all ranchers have to be. He is pleased to see the characters and will invite them to bring their whole crew to dinner tonight. If the characters explain their need for haste, John shrugs and says he'll let them use his own grav truck as well - that'll halve the required time for the loading operation. But only if they'll share dinner and a few tall tales . . .

6. Dinner at the Ranch:

At the end of a day in which the characters, with the aid of John's truck, have managed to shift 5 tons of egg powder, those members of the crew accepting the dinner invitation will have made their way to the ranch, probably piled into the back of the grav-truck covered in blankets.

At dinner, the characters are introduced to those of the household who are at home:

John Parnaby

Male, 57 years old.. John is one of the original ranchers, and was the first to realise the profit which could be made from the Dashgoats. His is now a contented family man and looks forward to handing over the ranch to his son Jose.

Chi Jang

Male, 32 years old. A small man from the Apge Consortium, Chi has worked for John as Grav-vehicle driver for seven years.

Jose Parnaby

Male, 17 years old. Jose has his father's large frame, but his black hair and fair complexion betray his mother's Apgean origins. His is a typical get-up-and-go youngster with no end of energy.

John will tell the characters that his wife, Kotin Parnaby, their infant son John Jr., and their 7-year-old daughter are staying in Smit Town with friends for a week or two. Thus Chi has had to do the cooking, and has gone a little berserk in the kitchen . . .

Dinner consists of large quantities of imported roast chicken with greens and potatoes, accompanied by home-made Stiltgrass wine. There is far more than enough of everything.

As the meal goes on, astute characters may notice that Chi is a little preoccupied about something. He is in fact concerned about the ranch-hand Connor who was out scouting the herds on a grav bike. He should have been back for dinner, and has not checked in. John isn't worried. Connor often disappears for a couple of days while ostensibly scouting the herds. It's his idea of a vacation to hurtle about the plains on his bike and camp among the Stiltgrass fronds. So long as the reports are good and Connor keeps his work up to date, John indulges him.

The characters are invited to spend the night at the ranch, and are provided with sleeping bags and blankets in the living room, as well as a couple more bottles of Stiltgrass wine. After a tiring day, a large meal and a great deal of wine, the characters should sleep soundly.

In the morning Chi fixes a simple breakfast before he and Jose begin today's task -- maintenance on the grav-harvester.

John again offers the characters the use of his truck, but warns them that a "Cold Night" is coming. This is the local slang for an eclipse of the sun by the gas giant. These eclipses are often 8-9 hours long and result in an extra night for the planet.

7. Cold Night on Dashgad

As John predicted, the eclipse begins as the characters are returning to the ranch after delivering another 5 tons of egg powder to the Starport. The temperature rapidly plunges to -17C as the "extra night" begins.

Upon arriving at the ranch, no-one comes to greet the characters. In the dark of the cold night, the only sounds are from the egg processor and the oxygen compressor.

A search of the ranch should alarm the characters, as it is apparent that something very bad has happened in the past 7 hours. The search should be played for tension by the referee, with lots of shadows and strange noises in dark places. The actual fate of the three ranchers is left to the referee. perhaps they have barricaded themselves into an upstairs room and waited for rescue, or escaped in the grav-harvester. Perhaps John went out with his shotgun and tried to take the predators on. In this case his mangled corpse will be found beside his empty gun, and no sign of the attacker, nor any damage done to it. Perhaps they went out in the harvester to search for Connor, and will reappear with shocked tales of hideous alien "things" marauding about the plains Perhaps the ranchers will never be found at all.

As the search progresses, the characters will be attacked. The attacker is a native of Dashgad who is very, very hungry....

The reason that Dashgad is not piled high with Dashgoats becomes apparent. There is a natural predator which keeps numbers down. This predator has a breeding cycle of some 60 standard years, and has thus far not been detected by survey teams of colonists.

Every 60 years, vast hordes of the predators hatch from their egg masses and burst forth from the soil in search of food. They descend upon the placid Dashgoat herds and slaughter them, killing over 90% of the Dashgoat population in a feeding-frenzy lasting a few days only. They then dig a deep hole and lay a small cluster of eggs, then wrap themselves around the egg mass to digest their vast meal before dying - perhaps of an overstrained digestive system. The slowly-decaying body of the mother creature feeds the developing eggs, many of which are not viable. Gradually, one or two predators develop from most egg masses, ready to burst forth in another 60 years.

This is the reason why Imperial biologists have not unravelled the mystery of the Dashgoat population. Their mayfly slayers are simply not present in the ecosystem most of the time.

It is time for the predators to awaken, and this tie they have found relatively few Dashgoats to feed upon as a result of the egg-harvesting process. The luckless Connor has, however, provided the predators with a change of diet, and they are gaining a taste for their new food.

People.

"Dash-Hunter"

100Kg, A2 F8. Speed: Double.
Armor (see note) 20/6
Weapon: Claw (Contact/Very short 2D)
Teeth (Contact 2D)

Note: These centipede-like creatures move very quickly above or below ground. They cannot dig in the stony ground of the uplands, however. Physical Appearance: They have a large head with a thick rigid shield of bone-like armor, together with two 2m long claws which grab prey and hold them for eating. These arms are adapted for grabbing feeding Dashgoats, which stand 2-3 m high. The head shield provides 3 rigid armor while the leathery hide of the body counts as 2-points of flexible armor.

The characters should be able to escape with some difficulty. Actual numbers of predators around the ranch should be determined by the referee. based on the numbers, armament and skills of the group.

8. Further Adventures

The characters' news will shock the authorities, as no-one knows the numbers of aliens on the planet, nor if the town is

under threat. To evacuate is no solution, as apart from the characters' ship the only other vessel in port is an ICO scout. The characters could flee, perhaps with a few people in their ship, but the majority of the population are stuck here.

It is a very cold night on Dashgad, and prospects for the colonists are as bleak.

Erick Wujcik Rolls The Dice

By J.A. Hitchcock

Fans of ***Amber Diceless*** and Erick Wujcik are in for a bit of surprise, if they haven't heard already: Wujcik is now Game Designer at PyroTechnix, co-developers of ***Raymond E. Feist's Return to Krondor*** computer RPG, due out from Sierra Studios in October. But don't fret -- Wujcik is still actively involved in traditional RPGs; computer games are just another part of the ever-growing RPG world.

"By hiring me, we're making a real commitment to bring computer roleplaying games up a few steps towards what's been developed over the past 20 years," Wujcik says.

PyroTechnix's decision to hire Wujcik was a no-brainer for company President Sinjin Bain. He was more than thrilled when Wujcik agreed to join the PyroTechnix team on April 1st of 1998.

"With Erick's tabletop knowledge and our development capabilities, we can make games that will be better," Bain notes. "The computer industry has always approached things in terms of thinking just about technology -- a lot of times limiting what can be done. Like, `Oh we can't do this, we can't do that,' instead of, `Okay, this is our inventory, this is where we want to be in six months -- what opportunities does that offer us?' And that's the way Erick approaches things."

Bain waves his hand in the air. "We're looking to the future to do something significant in the next few years. Something. . ."

"Epic!" Wujcik exclaims and Bain grins.

"Yes! Something epic in terms of flexibility and embodying what roleplaying really is." Bain nods and leaves the room to take a phone call.

Wujcik settles back in his chair, his face reflective. He knows that his 20+ years of RPG knowledge is an advantage for PyroTechnix over other computer software companies. And he knows the importance of integrating tabletop RPGs with computer RPGs for a truly more complete gaming experience -- something no one has done before.

"Computer RPGs have come a long way since the original ***Zork*** -- so have tabletop games. There's been an enormous amount of progress and diversity," Wujcik says. "But the missing component in computer RPGs is taking advantage of some of the limitations of face-to-face roleplaying."

Unlike a computer RPG, where it takes a budget of $1 million+ to produce, face-to-face tabletop RPGs can easily be developed by a couple of guys in a garage for a lot less money, but still remain unique and innovative. To integrate that uniqueness and innovation on a computer takes a significant amount of work.

"That's why I'm at PyroTechnix." Wujcik adds. "I'm one of the few guys who's done a number of different RPGs and systems. I'm really good at adapting existing properties and converting them; I can create new ones from scratch with no problem, but I can take a literary or comic work or movie and turn it into an exciting RPG. I'm not the only one who can do this, by any means, but I'm one of the few who have done it more than once."

The biggest hurdles for Wujcik so far have been adjusting to life in Cincinnati, Ohio (where PyroTechnix is based) and the way computer RPGs are developed as opposed to tabletop games.

"With a traditional RPG, you come up with an idea, gather some friends together and go straight into a playtest session," he explains. "Writing a roleplaying book is pretty much a solitary occupation as well, with just me pounding out the words. But designing a computer RPG is a much more difficult, time-consuming task, with a number of people

involved in the process -- teamwork. And there are many months of work between the original idea and a computerized playtest."

This hasn't dampened Wujcik's enthusiasm for the future of computer RPGs. If he has his way, there will be exciting changes coming -- he wants to give computer gamers more freedom. He believes that instead of imposing a rigid storyline on players that has to be followed in a particular way, in a certain direction and on a certain timetable, computer RPGs can be less repetitive and contain some surprises for the gamer.

"I feel any entry to the game should be interesting, whether you start from a saved position or from the beginning. It should always be a rich experience, where the world around you, even with minor changes, should be like a full three-dimensional real place and where the people you interact with give the appearance of being fully fleshed-out."

He'd like to take some of the innovations used in sim programs, where creatures evolve and "do their own thinking and acting," and incorporate them into computer RPGs so that gamers never know what to expect. Wujcik calls this the "sense of wonder" factor, where a gamer will say "WOW!" when they play a computer RPG. It may seem like a wild idea, but Wujcik feels games like this are actually not that far off.

For now, Wujcik is concentrating on final preparations for ***Return to Krondor.*** Because he arrived in the middle of the project, he's plunged into the game mechanics and story narrative to make sense out of everything. But that isn't keeping him away from tabletop RPGs.

"Traditional roleplaying is such a large part of my life, I can't imagine I'd ever stop coming up with new scenarios, new concepts and new roleplaying systems," he says. "During the last few months I've been working on a new Diceless RPG, which I'm calling ***47.*** There's no promised release date yet, but it will be through Phage Press."

That's just one of several projects he's developing, along with new ***Amber Diceless*** works for Phage Press and a couple he'd like to do for Palladium. Then there's the next ***Krondor*** installment, tentatively called ***Blood of Krondor.*** Wujcik has been working on the preliminary concepts and designs and the PyroTechnix team have come up with innovative character creation rules and new ideas for the combat system.

For fans still worried Wujcik is too busy at PyroTechnix, rest assured he will be at GenCon in August. PyroTechnix is planning a major splash and fans will not only see Wujcik, but also ***Krondor*** creator and award-winning fantasy author Raymond E. Feist. Feist will also participate in a special playtest Wujcik has organized based on ***Blood of Krondor.*** Plus, demonstrations of ***Return to Krondor,*** along with other Sierra Studios games, are scheduled.

Wujcik reflects on how he got involved in RPGs in 1977, then publishing his first RPG, ***Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles & Other Strangeness*** (still available from Palladium Books), in 1985:

"I just went from one cool revelation to another. For me, roleplaying was the perfect group event, giving me and my friends a much-needed outlet for our imagination and creativity," he recalls. "I still love roleplaying, Game Mastering, telling stories in a roleplaying framework, inventing new worlds, and creating new RPG systems. I also believe we've got a lot to learn and a lot of ground left to explore. After all, RPGs have only been around for a little over 20 years. We now have the tools to do some truly amazing things . . . and we will."

Related Links:

Unofficial Phage website

The Golden Circle (points to over 100 different Amber-related sites and info)

Happy Little Amberite

Palladium Books (many of Wujcik's works are listed here)

Return to Krondor Links:

Return to Krondor FAQ

Return to Krondor Official page from Sierra Studios

J.A. Hitchcock is the author of six books about Japan and freelances for print and online publications including ATHENA Reviews, Link-Up, Computer Gaming World, NH Editions, Inklings and Destination. Hitchcock is currently writing a book titled ***Stalked on the Internet: One Woman's Nightmare***

Sneak Peek - Return to Krondor's Storyline:

Sidi, a magician driven insane by contact with the mind of Nalor, the God of Evil, hires the Crawler to sink an Ishapian transport ship and retrieve the Tear of the Gods, a valuable Ishapian religious artifact.

Sidi hopes the Tear will act as a direct link between him and Nalor. This would provide Nalor with an eye on the world, and allow Sidi direct access to the knowledge of the God. The Crawler, a sinister crimelord operating out of Durbin, knows the Ishapian ship will be well-guarded and assigns his toughest, most ruthless operative to the case, a vicious mercenary known as Bear. Sidi presents Bear with a magic amulet that grants him immense power as well as protection from Ishapian magic.

Sidi intentionally fails to mention the amulet's other properties -- its power stems from the evil within Bear's innermost being. As he uses the amulet, it draws that evil to the surface, placing him more and more under the influence of Nalor.

Sidi offers to provide the Crawler with additional magic items when the job is finished, as well as any loot gathered from the ship. Following Sidi's orders, Bear hits the ship off of Widow's Point, an isolated stretch of coastline in an area widely believed to be haunted. The true source of Widows' Point, however, is the hidden Temple of Nalor, constructed by Sidi in the cliffs beneath the peninsula.

During a fierce battle, the ship is badly damaged and crew killed. As Bear fights his way towards the Tear, the amulet protects him from the magic of the Ishapian priests by absorbing their spells, turning their power against them. Before he can seize the Tear, the ship sinks, carrying the Tear to the bottom of the Bitter Sea.

Knute, first mate of the pirate ship, is horrified by the changes taking place in Bear and the idea of stealing an object holy to the Gods. He escapes with most of the loot and flees to Krondor.

Knute goes to Lucas, innkeeper of the Rainbow Parrot, to hide the treasure and help him "turn state's evidence" against the rest of the crew. Lucas and Knute use the Parrot's secret spillway to transport the treasure to the city sewers below.

Unfortunately, Knute -- who has a habit of getting drunk and boasting in local taverns -- is caught by the city guard and arrested for piracy. Hoping to avoid a hanging, Knute leaks information concerning the treasure to the guard.

Meanwhile, Bear comes to Krondor to pressure the Wrecker's guild into raising the ship and discovers Knute has been caught. He plans to kill Knute and anyone else who might know of Sidi and the Crawler's plot.

. . . And so Return to Krondor begins.

Northon's Gear Crushers

A Heavy Gear Squadron

Text and Art by Dream Pod 9

Corporal Lyra Vadine could hear the Great Dawgs barking in the distance. She sipped her drink and nodded to her companion.

"Yup, I had to. I really didn't want to, but it had to happen at some point. Are there any newbies who get away with it?"

Alys shook her head. "Nope. It's like North and South, there's no way you can stay neutral unless you want to be a Badlander." Alys pointed a thumb at the crowd in the mess, the kind that ate marinated landshark for breakfast. "No way you can do that here."

Lyra laughed. "Speaking of shark, has he come out of the hangar yet?"

Alys smiled. "You mean Cain? I expect not. You did make sure all the Gears' fuel tanks were empty? And that the hangar was locked from the outside?"

Lyra nodded and gulped down her drink. "Yeah, sure did. And with the amount of dawgnip you sprinkled onto his uniform, it'll be a bit before the smell wears off and they lose interest in him." She glanced at the clock and motioned for the bartender to come over. She showed him her empty glass. "Two more of the same, on me."

History

The development of the Heavy Gear in TN 1678 (5950 A.D.) marked a major milestone in the history of warfare. A cross between infantry and cavalry units, Gear-equipped troops could react with great flexibility to almost any situation. New units were rapidly formed and trained to take full advantage of this new tool.

Rapid City commissioned the formation of the 1st and 2nd Heavy Gear regiments in TN 1680 (5952 A.D.). Equipped with brand new Hunters fresh from the factory, these units were to be incorporated into the city's defense militia to provide a rapid-response force. Although the 2nd Armored Infantry saw less action than the 1st, it was led by the notorious Colonel Sheisha Nakamore, daughter of retired General Nakamore. Soon enough, it became traditional to assign most routine duties to companies from the 1st Armored Infantry and to keep the really difficult assignments for the 2nd. When the Duelist tradition began, both regiments trained their own Duelists and what was supposed to be a healthy rivalry became personal. First of a long-lasting and bitter tradition, Duelist Stenton Barruka (from the 1st Heavy Gear regiment) was repeatedly defeated by his counterpart, the lethal Maeve Llam. (It is rumored that their ferocious antagonism was the result of a failed romantic relationship.) Their last duel (TN 1687) resulted in both their deaths and created a rift between the units which has never been bridged.

As the city-states of the UMF came together, they assigned new numbers to their respective forces to simplify roll call. Thus, the 2nd Heavy Gear regiment of Rapid City became (after much protest from the unit members and cheers from the 1st Heavy Gear regiment) the 15th Heavy Gear regiment of the United Mercantile Federation. The newly formed 15th was moved and stationed in Lyonnesse. Although most of the regiment was fairly bitter about it, all of its members remained stoic in front of their former rivals (the 1st Heavy Gear) and maintained that *they*, at least, were moving up in the world, whereas the 1st was staying where it belonged -- at the bottom rung of the ladder.

When the Northern Guard was formed in TN 1690 (5960 A.D.), each member league contributed some troops for the new army. The Federation was unwilling to send new (and expensive) units for this assignment and looked instead at its most damaged forces. The 15th Heavy Gear, by now known as the Gear Crushers, had taken a mauling during a deep raid made by Protectorate forces ten cycles before and had never fully recovered. In a clever move, the United Mercantile Federation sent the 15th to the Northern Guard, thus forcing the other leagues to foot part of the bill for the regiment's reconstruction. Since there was already a 15th Heavy Gear regiment in the Guard, the Gear Crushers were renamed the 27th Heavy Gear and stationed in Kossuth. It was nearly decimated in volunteer suicide missions during the War of the Alliance and was merged with another unit into the 43rd Heavy Gear regiment Gear Crushers. To the dismay of the former 2nd Heavy Gear from Rapid City, the other half of their regiment was their old rival, the 1st Heavy Gear.

To this day, the rivalry continues and it is Colonel Ethan B. Northon's curse that he must cope with the hassles it generates almost every day. Although the field performance of the regiment has been exemplary, both "factions" never pass up an occasion to pit their Duelists against one another to see who is really the best . . .

Grizzly

Unit Overview

The Gear Crushers is a regiment composed of four companies, each divided into four sections of three squadrons with five Heavy Gears each (mostly Hunters), along with the necessary command and support personnel. The 1st and 2nd companies came from the original 2nd Heavy Gear regiment, while the 3rd and 4th came from the remnants of the old 1st Heavy Gear.

Regiment Composition

Heavy Gear Regiment:
Heavy Gear Company x 4
Support Company
Command Section

HG Company Sections Included

1st (TV = 35806)
Patrol x 2
General x 2

2nd (TV = 42513)
General x 1
Assault x 2
Sentry x 1

3rd (TV = 40618)
Patrol x 2
Assault x 2

4th (TV = 43535)
General x 1
Sentry x 3

Section Types Squadrons Included

Patrol (TV = 9207)

Recon x 2
General Purpose x 1

General (TV = 8696)
Recon x 1
General Purpose x 1
Strike x 1

Assault (TV = 11102)
Strike x 2
Fire Support x 1

Sentry (TV = 11613)
Recon x 1
Strike x 1
Fire Support x 1

43rd Heavy Gear Regiment Typical Squadrons

General Purpose
(Threat Value 2375)
x5 Hunter -- (1 x Lvl 3, 4 x Lvl 2)

Recon
(Threat Value 3416)
x3 Cheetah -- (1 x Lvl 3, 2 x Lvl 2)
x2 Hunter -- (2 x Lvl 2)

Strike
(Threat Value 2905)
x2 Hunter -- (2 x Lvl 2)
x2 Jaguar -- (2 x Lvl 2)
x1 Grizzly -- (1 x Lvl 2)

Fire Support
(Threat Value 5292)
x4 Grizzly -- (1 x Lvl 3, 3 x Lvl 2)
x1 Cheetah -- (1 x Lvl 2)

Selected Personalities

The following introduces some of the regiment's personalities. The box below each personnel description contains the notable skills and attributes of that person.

Colonel Ethan Balthazar Northon

Attributes

AGI	0	APP	-1	BLD	1	CRE	1	FIT	1
INF	1	KNO	0	PER	1	PSY	0	WIL	2
STR	1	HEA	1	STA	35	UD	7	AD	6

Skills

Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.
Ambush	1	0	First Aid	1	0	Melee	1	0
Athletics	1	1	Gunnery(HG)	2	1	Music	2	1
Combat Sense	2	1	HTH	2	0	Notice	1	1
Communications	1	0	HG Pilot	2	0	Small Arms	2	0
Dodge	1	0	Leadership	3	1	Survival	1	1
Drive	1	0	Mechanics	1	0	Tactics	2	1

Description Jaguar

The Gear Crushers' commanding officer is a tall, well built man in his late forties. Ethan Northon is a native of Rapid City, as are many of the other Crushers. He is a career military officer with a distinguished service record. Twice wounded in the War of the Alliance, in which he fought as a Heavy Gear trooper with the 23rd Terranovan Lancers (one of the many multinational units temporarily created during the war), Northon is a hardened soldier with a will of iron and a heart of gold (towards his friends, at least). In order to relieve some of the pressure of running such a turbulent regiment as the 43rd Infantry, Col. Northon has been known to play a little violin late at night, when most of the base is asleep…

VITAL STATISTICS

Age: 46 cycles
Height: 1.81 meter
Weight: 97.7 kg
Hair Color: n/a
Eye Color: blue
Handedness: right-handed

Captain Elehn Altzer

Attributes

AGI	1	APP	1	BLD	0	CRE	0	FIT	0
INF	2	KNO	1	PER	0	PSY	0	WIL	1
STR	0	HEA	0	STA	25	UD	4	AD	3

Skills

Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.
Ambush	1	1	First Aid	1	1	Melee	1	1
Athletics	1	0	Gunnery(HG)	2	1	Notice	1	0
Combat Sense	2	0	HTH	2	1	Small Arms	2	1
Communications	1	1	HG Pilot	2	1	Survival	1	0
Dodge	1	1	Leadership	2	2	Tactics	1	1
Drive	1	1	Mechanics	1	1			

Description

The cool and professional Elehn Altzer commands the first company, and is generally viewed as Northon's confidante and the regiment's second in command. A proficient Heavy Gear pilot, her main strength is the respect she inspires among the troops. The men and women under her direct command are fanatically loyal to her (even more, some say, than to Colonel Northon himself). She has the Colonel's complete trust (and, rumor has it, a little bit more), something she does not trifle with: she admires the renowned war hero and feels honored to serve in his command.

VITAL STATISTICS

Age: 39 cycles
Height: 1.69 meter
Weight: 60.5 kg
Hair Color: red
Eye Color: green
Handedness: right-handed

Sergeant Major Allen Frisk

Attributes

AGI	0	APP	-1	BLD	1	CRE	1
FIT	1	INF	1	KNO	0	PER	1
PSY	-2	WIL	2	STR	1	HEA	0
STA	30	UD	7	AD	6		

Skills

Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.
Ambush	1	0	Gunnery(HG)	1	1	Notice	2	1
Athletics	2	1	HTH	2	0	Small Arms	2	0
Combat Sense	2	1	HG Pilot	2	1	Survival	1	1
Dodge	1	0	Leadership	2	1	Tactics	1	1
Drive	1	0	Melee	1	0	Teaching	2	1

Cheetah

Description

The regiment's discipline officer, Sergeant Major Frisk is feared by every living soul on the base, save perhaps for the Colonel and the captains. With the look of an athletic, grumpy old man, Frisk has the unenviable job of making sure rivalries within the regiment stay put, and punishing those responsible when they don't. Rumor has it that the Sergeant Major was once a formidable Heavy Gear pilot, but that after being tortured by Earth soldiers during the War he lost too much of his coordination and had to change careers. After a few cycles as a boot camp instructor, he was promoted to regimental non-commissioned officer in the Gear Crushers. Whatever his past, however, you'll never catch him talking about it... and asking is considered more dangerous than a solo recon mission in the Badlands.

VITAL STATISTICS

Age: 44 cycles
Height: 1.69 meter
Weight: 85.5 kg
Hair Color: Gray
Eye Color: brown
Handedness: right-handed

Ranger Cain Bisset

Attributes

AGI	2	APP	0	BLD	0	CRE	1	FIT	0		
INF	1	KNO	0	PER	2	PSY	-1	WIL	0		
STR	0	HEA	0	STA	25	UD	5	AD	3		

Skills

Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.
Athletics	1	0	First Aid	1	0	Mechanics	1	0
Combat Sense	2	2	Gunnery(HG)	2	2	Notice	1	2
Communications	1	0	HTH	2	2	Small Arms	1	2
Dodge	1	2	HG Pilot	3	2	Survival	1	1
Drive	1	2	Leadership	1	1	Tactics	1	1

Description

A man of roguish charm and an excellent Gear pilot, Cain Bisset was the perfect choice to represent the regiment as Duelist. The Gear Crushers are extremely proud that this honor was bestowed upon one of them and never miss an opportunity to boast about it. Cain himself is not known for his modest behavior, and would probably be branded an insolent braggart if he wasn't so good. Assigned to one of the 1st Company's General Purpose sections, Cain is therefore part of the "2nd Armored Infantry" faction. Although he has tried to stay above the petty rivalry, his own rambunctious spirit has drawn him in quite a few times (they shouldn't have painted his Hunter scorching hot pink if they didn't want him to get involved...).

VITAL STATISTICS

Age: 33 cycles
Height: 1.79 meter
Weight: 87.7 kg
Hair Color: auburn
Eye Color: brown
Handedness: right-handed

Senior Corporal Jesska Dunn

Attributes

AGI	2	APP	0	BLD	-1	CRE	2	FIT	0		
INF	0	KNO	0	PER	1	PSY	0	WIL	0		
STR	0	HEA	0	STA	20	UD	4	AD	2		

Skills

Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.
Athletics	1	0	Gunnery(HG)	3	1	Notice	1	1
Combat Sense	2	1	HTH	2	2	Small Arms	1	2
Communications	1	0	HG Pilot	2	2	Survival	1	2
Dodge	1	2	Leadership	1	0	Tactics	2	2

Description

Cain Bisset's main rival inside the regiment, Sr. Corporal Dunn is not quite as proficient as the boisterous Duelist, though her tactical skills are undoubtedly superior. In all other aspects, Jesska is more like Bisset's negative than his mirror image; a quiet, intense young woman, she has earned her comrades' respect, not with flamboyant muscle flexing, but with straight and honest military flair and

team-oriented training. With a few month's worth of experience she could dethrone Bisset as regimental Duelist. She does not particularly care for the title herself, though; the fact that she belongs to the other faction might better explain her popularity as the #1 contender.

VITAL STATISTICS

Age: 28 cycles
Height: 1.56 meter
Weight: 50.5 kg
Hair Color: blond
Eye Color: gray
Handedness: right-handed

Badges and Colors

The vehicles of the Gear Crushers are painted gray with an overlaid mottled brown-green pattern, suitable for the mountainous environment in which Rapid City is located. The Gear's head is usually painted a darker shade of gray, without any brown or green spots. This drab color scheme helps hide the machines equally well in the city's massive industrial complexes or the mountains they usually patrol.

The antenna of each Gear is painted according to its squadron. The first squadron of a section has white antennae, the second green and the third blue. The tri-branched insignia of the CNCS is displayed on the right shoulder. The front hip armor plates sport the Federation's insignia on the right plate and the letters "RC" in white on the left one. A common practice amongst the pilots aligned with the "1st Heavy Gear" faction is to write a popular quote or saying on the Gear's chest. Pilots who fancy themselves part of the "2nd Heavy Gear" are more into painting pin-ups and cartoon characters on the helmet and shoulders of their Gears.

Bisset's Hunter is colored differently, however. As the unit's designated Duelist, he is entitled to sport a customized paint scheme to identify himself and his function. While the body, shoulders and lower legs of his Gear, nicknamed "Honeypot," are camouflaged just like the other machines in the unit, the remaining parts are painted pure white, in stark contrast to the rest of the vehicle. Red and blue trim lines run down the side of the white parts, highlighting them in a striking way. "Honeypot" is stenciled on the right side of the head in black and gold letters. As the leader of a first squadron, Cain's Gear has a white antenna.

The unit's badge, worn on the left shoulder of the uniform, represents a bright yellow, stylized Gear's hand crushing a blue lightning bolt. Laurel wreaths surround the badge, with the regiment's motto ("Perseverare ad mortem," which means "Persevere unto Death") embroidered below in gold thread.

Adventure Seeds

Northon's Gear Crushers can be used in a variety of ways in a campaign. They can be acquaintances of the Player Characters, opposition, even nemeses. Alternately, it is possible to have a military campaign where PCs get to play Gear Crushers.

Toys for Boys

The Player Characters have been given a delicate mission: to gather information on a new prototype developed by one of Rapid City's up-and-coming design firms. The firm's workshop is located deep within Industrial Zone #4, which is part of the Crushers' assigned patrol route. Can the PCs sneak in and out without facing the Crushers?

Let Sleeping Dogs . . .

Colonel Northon is nervous, and for good reason. General Dreyr, the division's commanding officer, is due to arrive within a few days for his annual inspection. However, as usual at this time of year, old rivalries have flared up between members of the two regiments that now form the Gear Crushers. Using force and diplomacy (and the PCs!) the regiment's commanding officer wants to make sure everything will run smoothly during General Dreyr's visit.

Peacetime Blues

The United Mercantile Federation has been at peace for too long and the economy is sluggish. Unrest is spreading through the least fortunate city-states, which are thoroughly unsatisfied with the central government. According to the state department's analysts, one of them (Zagreb) is on the verge of breaking away from the UMF; popular support for the secessionist elements is high and insurrection against the present government (pro-UMF) is very likely. As a protector of the peace in the CNCS, the Northern Guard has sent a few companies to make sure that matters don't get out of hand. Will the PCs be able to handle this delicate policing job, without provoking incidents that would anger the local population?

Area 43

Something's going on inside the 43rd regiment. A bunch of simple soldiers and Heavy Gear pilots seem to form a separate unit within the Gear Crushers, always conducting secret missions even though they rarely leave the base. Whenever anyone tries to ask them about what they're involved with, they are told to mind their own business, in the interest of "national security." Also, every so often the soldiers are sent home on permanent sick leave . . . Is the Northern Guard conducting secret scientific research using soldiers as guinea pigs? Or does it have something to do with the rumors of a new type of nuclear-powered engine? Whatever it is, the PCs (journalists? investigators? concerned soldiers?) are ready to risk finding out the truth.

Dust-Off

A short one-shot Vagaverse run for any game system

by Sandy Antunes
Art by Dan Smith

"A man walks into a bar . . . "

A classic beginning to a joke. Recognized by English longbowmen and 20th-century troops, loved by grey elves, electronically chortled at by 23rd-century cybernetic mercenaries. Tavern and bar humor are universal, and it's not surprising that one enterprising soul tried to make money off this fact, by linking his bar across time and space to all its kin. Naming his joint "The Floating Vagabond," the owner, Spit, hooked an illegal Random Dimensional Portal Generator to his door to link it with every "Joe's," "Flying Gryphon" and "Zappers" in the multiverse.

"Dust Off" is a tavern mini-scenario for any game system, in any time. It is designed for days when your entire game group can't make it, but you still want to run something. In such a brief jaunt to a bar, the characters need not fear death, or indeed any plot upheaval that might affect their adventuring lives, quests for experience, sworn oaths, and so on. But there are always consequences for one's actions, and they may gain a boon or a curse from their actions.

The setting is long after the prime years of the Vagabond, at a time when the doors have long been closed. A transient surge of power arced through the old Random Dimensional Portal Generator, though, and once more the Vagabond door linked with someplace else; in this case, the very tavern your characters were entering. It doesn't matter which campaign you are running, since the Vagabond operates under rules of its own; half of the challenge is figuring out what those rules are.

The scenario has three parts: Sudden Arrival; Getting a Drink; and Getting Home. Somewhere along the course of this bar tour, the ghost of Spit will appear and try and collect on their tab. And, if and when the crosstime device is reactived for the trip home, there may be a motley horde of incoming patrons to face before a final exit can be done. The adventure follows the rule of threes -- everything has three parts, three options, or three sections. Malevolent Referees can emphasize this detail as if it had significance, to confuse their players.

Sudden Arrival

Several alternate paragraphs are provided below to help establish the mood.

"You enter a dark, dusty hallway, or perhaps a throne room. An orb near the door glows briefly, then fades. There is a dread feeling of death and decay in the air, or perhaps simply the remnants of an unholy alliance. You see a long altar-like structure across the room, and a faint wind blows through. The place seems strangely familiar, though."

"Your instincts crying out warning, you enter the strange vault-like room. There's a strange device near the door that flutters briefly with a glow of electricity, then fades. The room is filled with tables and chairs, all dusty, with a larger obstruction on the opposite side. You feel like you are being watched, but there's an almost comforting feel to the place."

"You walk in. Instantly, you realize that it's a bar, just like any bar, except long ago closed and probably dry. You feel no great excitement, merely a great thirst. And your shoe is untied."

The referee should describe the place in any terms the characters would find strange and foreboding, adding more familiar details as they explore more. Eventually they should realize there are only three areas with anything useful: In Front of the Bar, The Bar, and Behind the Bar.

In Front of the Bar: There are a great many tables, some still unbroken, but precious few chairs. Cobwebs cover everything. Near the door is a metal box of unknown nature (the Portal). The room is dusty, empty, and boring. There's a door in the far wall, but no windows. If the door is opened, the characters learn what an airlock is -- it's a task of average difficulty for one person to close it without being sucked out. If you are sucked out, a giant Ghostly arm will reach out and pull you back in, then a ghostly voice will intone "you owe me a day's pay for that", and (surprise) the Ghost of Spit will materialize (see below). Otherwise, the only thing to do here is either sit, drink, fight, or some combination of the above.

The Bar: An enormous bar dominates half of the room. Made of a green seamless material, deeply pitted with age, it is covered with glassware. Some of the tankards still contain liquids. Your attention is just naturally drawn to the bar, clearly the most interesting area of the room.

Behind the Bar: Easily vaulting over the bar (or climbing, for those shorter characters), a dazzling array of partially emptied bottles await. Most of the labels are worn off, but three are still clearly readable: Old Minx, Djinn, and a bottle simply marked with a large X. There is also a rusted old money box with a cheap lock. If characters are psychically sensitive to ghosts, they will be able to invoke a cheerful and talkative Ghost of Spit if they so choose (or, they can invoke the crabby, irritable Ghost of Spit, depending on how nice they are). Otherwise, he won't react unless they try to open the money box or leave, in which case he'll be irate.

Getting a Drink

Given so few options, characters will likely start drinking while talking, either trying an unmarked bottle or trying a marked bottle. Unmarked bottles have random effects (use a potion table from your game system, or indeed from any game system you happen to have. Cross-dimensional effects and all that). The three marked bottles are worth drinking. 'Old Minx' is a potent liquor, so potent that anyone who imbibes cannot speak for at least 10 minutes. 'Djinn' is a basic gin-type concoction that, strangely enough, causes anyone who swallows a decent amount to suddenly be unable to tell a lie while in the Vagabond. And, 'X' is the house special, 'Singularity.' A single drink of this, and it imbibes the drinker with some of the ambiance of the Vagaverse. Specifically, the character gains the following choice of schticks (though every time they use a schtick, they have to drink again. Three drinks of 'Singularity' and a non-professional drinker is unconscious, but no need to tell them that. A pro might last four or five drinks.)

Newton Effect. If the character sees something they really don't believe is possible, they roll against Common Sense/Intelligence/Anything appropriate (against the target's Luck/Cool/Will/Whatever, or a base chance of Average difficulty) and, if they succeed, they're right -- it is impossible, and the anomaly vanishes. This can cause a spell to just fizzle, an Incoming Patron to suddenly lose abilities, or a fellow party member to suddenly start being sensible.

Murphy Effect. When needed, something an opponent tries will just plain fail. But, then something annoying and possibly disasterous will happen to the character as a backlash. Players can choose when and what the "success" is, and it's the referee's call whether they get to choose their own proportional backlash.

Rambo Effect. Anything fired at short range (which is the entire bar) at the character will just simply miss. In addition, any enemies will usually (80% of the time) fire at the Rambo character instead of anyone else. As a down side, anything the Rambo character says during a fire-fight is basically unintelligable. And swords and punches still work really well against them.

Referees who are entertained by these effects are welcome to let characters keep them after returning to their home world, if they bring a bottle with them. Only Vagaverse marked bottles will do this, though, and they hold less than a dozen swigs per bottle.

Characters also might try to open the cash box. It's easily opened, but opening it reveals only some (now) worthless Vagaverse paper money, and summons an irate Ghost of Spit.

Getting Home

There are two parts of Getting Home -- the Ghost of Spit, and the Random Dimensional Portal Generator. If Spit's ghost has not appeared prior to this, trying to leave will make him manifest and demand they settle their tab (which includes a door fee, any stuff damaged, drinks drunk, etc). It will typically come to about a day's pay for each person. See Spit's full bio below, since their interaction with him is the driver for this scenario.

Eventually, the Portal Generator will have to be powered up. There are three methods which spring to mind. Success generally opens the Portal in all directions, letting in the Incoming Patrons and then informing the characters that their exit gateway will take 15 minutes to 'recalibrate.' Failure will temporarily activate the device (much as the characters got sucked in) and let in the Incoming Patrons; the characters can try again or beg for help (the Space Marshall patron in particular is skilled at such repair).

- If Spit is somehow reincorporated into corporeal form, he will be able to whack the device a bit and get it to function. Indeed, this will reopen the Vagabond!
- Technological characters can try and gimmick it, as a average difficult task.
- Magical types can try to power it up, but it's a very difficult task.

The Ghost of Spit

Put succintly, Hawk "Spit" Luger is an ugly, abrasive fellow whose main interests are money and, well, money. He hates critics and people who stiff him, and likes people who drink nicely. Under the union regs, a bartender is not allowed to die while on duty, and Spit used this to his advantage for many centures. Eventually, though, he was faced with another union reg: "Bartenders who accrue vacation in excess of one century lose any excess not immediately used."

Unable to just give something away, Spit reluctantly took a vacation and was promptly iced by a competitor. This slightly tragic end has put him in a foul mood, and as a result he haunts the Vagabond. He'll only show up when someone notices him, bothers him, or tries to leave without paying. In the context of this adventure, he is also Karma incarnate. Keep a running Karma tab on each character (staring with zero).

Spit is annoyed when a character:

goes Behind the Bar:	-1 pt
tries to open cash box:	-1 pt
. . . and succeeds:	-2 pts more
destroys a table or chair:	-1 pt
opens the airlock:	-1 pt
refuses to sing when faced with Incoming Patrons:	-1 pt
refuses to pay entire tab:	-2 pts
refuses to pay part of tab:	-1 pt
argues the tab with him:	-1 pt
insults his bar:	-5 pts
reincarnates Spit as a cute furry animal or such:	-5 pts

On the other hand, Spit is pleased when a character:

is the first to drink from an unmarked bottle:	+1 pt
drinks a marked bottle:	+2 pts
engages in a brawl and sings:	+2 pts
engages in pleasant conversation with him:	+1 pt
is the first to compliment him on his bar:	+3 pts
compliments the bar after someone else did:	+1 pt
ressurects Spit as more or less his old self:	+5 pts

Anyone with positive karma will likely receive one of Spit's boons, a ghostly blessing. Roll a d6 or something and if the roll is under their Karma, Spit blesses them (or, just fake the roll and give it to 'em anyway). He bestows these with a simple, inauspicious "Hey, take care!".

1. **Ethereal thanks:** the next hostile ghostly-type entity to meet the character will suddenly back off and say "Oh, sorry", and never trouble that character

2. **Elder God thanks:** Spit casually drops the character's name in a conversation, and the Great Elder God he was chatting with becomes curious. When faced with certain death, the character gets one reprieve, though they will likely never know why. So, the bullet misses, or they survive the fall, or they last an extra round in combat before their overwhelming superior foe gets a second frustrated whack at them.

3. **Drunkard's thanks:** They will never get a hangover again, no matter how much they drink. Pity Spit couldn't do this trick while he was alive!

By the same token, anyone with a negative karma balance will, guaranteed, be cursed, noisly, as in "I, the Ghost of Spit, do curse you, so there!" Choose one of these.

1. **Ethereal curse:** The next ghostly-type encountered (if indeed one ever is) will take it upon itself to haunt the character for a month and a day, causing whatever mischief it can.

2. **Elder God's prank:** Hearing your name angrily mentioned, a Great Elder God stops by to investigate. For one day, every minor thing that can go wrong, will.

3. **Drunkard's curse:** At the first touch of alcohol, the character becomes briefly and noisily sick. Subsequent drinks have no effect, assuming their comrades stuck around.

The Incoming Patrons

Viewed either as a simple bunch of hearty visitors, or a desperate plot device by the Referee to add a last-minute dose of action, these noisy drunkards are from a variety of time periods. Specifically, a Cowboy from 1800s Earth, a Space Marshall from the year 2030 A.D., a Fire mage from a mana-heavy fantasy world, a tribal shaman from a dark future technopunk world, and a castle-building vampire from a gothic Dark Ages. Their needs are simple; they want drinks, and assume the characters are the bartending staff. Scale their abilities so that they are more skilled than the characters, especially if a character overlaps abilities with them (i.e. the Cowboy can draw and shoot better than a gun-toting PC, the mage and shaman have more potent spells than the PCs, etc). This will annoy most players, but fortunately the Patrons have only three goals:

Get drinks,
Start a Brawl, and
Get more drinks.

The Brawl will be started by some slight, either real or imaginary. Either ignoring the Marshall or paying too much

attention to him, for example, is enough to set him off. Their goal in the brawl is to humiliate and, at worst, knock out the characters. They are assisted by their schtick, the Rogers and Hammerstein effect. To wit, the Patrons (and thus the Referee) must sing during the Brawl or any significant interactions. (Referees who hate singing, like I do, can just put on some loud vocal background music to suffice. Opera, musicals and old Village People records work fine.) All allies and enemies must join in on the song (even if they can't speak the same language, can't see the character, or can't hold a tune). The Patrons have about 2 points of singing ability each, and you can rate the PCs as either: 0 (won't sing), 1 (sings a bit), or 2 (darn, sings better and more than you). Add up the Patrons' total versus the characters' total, and whomever is higher gets a +2 (or 1 task level, or other significant bonus) on anything they try, as long as they keep on singing while they do it. In any case, the edge the Patrons have depends on whether they players sing, and who outnumbers whom. Run the Brawl cinematically and very over the top (but all wounds are non-lethal), and remember that the losers will have to pay the Ghost of Spit for damages before leaving.

By John Karakash

One of the great balancing acts ***INWO*** manages is hidden within the structure of the game itself, but only truly experienced players grasp the concept: you can only win if the other players let you win.

Each player has the twin, and usually complementary, goals of making his victory conditions and ensuring that his evil opponents don't make theirs in time. (Shared Victories are outside the scope of this article, but some of the following should be of use even then.)

It is almost axiomatic that when you look like you are about to win, your "friends" will do their utmost -- even work together! -- to bring you down. So victory attempts should be subtle and come wholly as a surprise when you finally, smugly, reveal your evil schemes.

Below are several broad outlines for tricks and surprises. All of them depend on looking harmless and going for the sudden win when people have mostly discounted you. (Great INWO players never discount anyone.) Plus, they'll usually allow you to maintain a tight power structure that is much easier to defend.

Secret Goals (aka That Old Thing?)

It should be easy to fool them, right? Gather up some Weird groups, play the Hail Eris! Goal and go for the easy win as, say, Bavaria. Who would suspect? Right?

Wrong.

Everyone but the most novice players can see this coming from miles away . . . especially if you are taking the Weird groups that Discordia needs (unless he is gathering high power Groups for his Power for its Own Sake Goal . . .).

The trick here is to look like you are going for your standard Illuminated Goal but actually be following your hidden agenda. Don't grow too quickly, though! Try to time your win carefully, for you have to balance the fact that they can always bring you down against the need to move quickly enough to stop one of them from winning.

Examples:

Bermuda needs a Weird group for its public Illuminated Goal, but what they really want is three of them for the Hail Eris! Goal.

Bavaria is plowing ahead on power and it might be easy to miss that they are coming perilously close to getting three suitable groups for Criminal Overlords or The Corporate Masters.

The Servants of Cthulhu have a variety of choices that involve controlling/destruction of groups. This has been a bit overused, so sneak up on 'em with a Rewriting History or a quick OMCL (Orbital Mind Contol Lasers) adjustment on the turn you attempt your win.

Blinded by Science and Sufficiently Advanced Technology can astound your rivals if you are the Adepts of Hermes with six proper Magic groups! In this case you might want to avoid getting any magic resources.

Changing the Rules (aka Can They Do That!?)

A sometimes-overlooked strategy is going straight for your Illuminati's Goal. Or rather, go straight for your Illuminati's Goal, but don't appear to be making much headway. (Most of these ideas can be used with other evil schemes as well.)

INWO is chock full of cards that modify power, alignment and other rules of the game. Anytime you mess with the rules of reality, there is opportunity.

Examples:

Cyborg Soldiers/Necronomicon: A big power boost, yes, but a little too popular. Every deck that might depend on any resource should have a Forgery . . . just in case.

Orbital Mind Control Lasers: A favorite among the ***INWO*** crowd. Another very popular card that almost is not worth fighting over. If you use it early, keep a Cover of Darkness around, otherwise have a Forgery on hand for the time when you really need it (i.e., during your victory attempt).

Gay Activists: A very useful card and not played nearly enough. More limited than the OMCL, but also less fought over. Need an important alignment in the end game? Make a branch of your power structure of the opposite alignment and use Gay Activists and OMCL to surprise your rivals. If you can get two or more tokens on Gay Activists, that can really cause a panic!

The Clipper Chip: Sure, you can bring this out early, and give a big boost to your power structure, but this only invites attack. Better to save it and then use it to boost your power by 2 per Government group! Bavaria can easily have 5 moderate power Government groups, plus one or two good ones and then get a sudden boost of 14 total power! The problem here is that Government groups are pretty popular so keep the various alignment changers in mind.

New World Order Cards: The ultimate rule changers. Avoid the urge to play them early (except for NWOs that you won't need for the victory attempt) and use them for the sudden coup. Alignments and attributes can shift, powers change abruptly, and all sorts of mayhem can ensue. Keep a plot-negater (like Hoax) to stop people who would try to remove this card. Another good plan, if your opponents have hurt you with a NWO is to wait until removing it will bring you into the victory range. Also see what happens when you replace Don't Forget to Smash the State with Law and Order (they're both Yellow NWOs).

Unmasked!: A good card for its sheer deceptive power. Unfortunately, it's hard to coordinate having this card and the proper Illuminati card in your hand. Crop Circles can help out here as can the Crystal Skull or the Shroud of Turin.

Hack and Slash (aka Loot the Quivering Corpses of My Rivals)

This is a favorite theme among ***INWO*** players, and why not? You get to improve your own situation and hurt someone else at the same time. Unfortunately, as a starting or midgame strategy it makes your opponents too paranoid to ignore you properly so it is most useful in the victory attempt.

The trick here is to make a single, quick strike on the power structure or resources of your rivals and be able to declare on that turn. You should either do this when your opponents are weakened from their own fights or you can defend yourself against the inevitable attempts to poke holes in your well-laid plans.

The problem with this strategy is that it depends on how your opponents choose to play and what they do with their power structures. Still, it can work well if you are able to think on your feet.

Examples:

Forgery: One of my favorite cards because it takes something valuable from your rivals and adds it to your hand. A definite balance-tipper for the, hopefully, final turn!

Phone Phreaks: Very popular for nipping off a few groups. If you can manipulate your rival's power structure so there are two to three groups hanging exposed, you are sitting pretty.

Privileged Attack: If you aren't Bavaria, get this card. Multinational Oil Companies is a pretty good substitute for smaller games. It's critical to avoid interference if you're going for the vulnerable branch of someone's structure. Keep an eye on the Black Helicopters for Government or Secret Group structures.

Sorry Wrong Number: A great Zap! for stealing Groups.

Reorganization: Almost essential after you grab a juicy bunch of your opponent's groups. Either this or have a lot of spare tokens to protect yourself.

General Advice

Getting the right cards: Anything that lets you select or draw additional cards is a big help. Warehouse 23, Crystal Skull, Crop Circles, Mossad, etc. will let you grow faster or, more Illuminatedly, have the right plots in hand for the critical moment. Grave Robbers is great for those Resources that might be hard to locate in time.

Reloads: While not nearly as useful as before, these are still valuable cards in that they will let you get tokens on your weaker groups that have important SPECIAL ABILITIES. Especially for Discordia (whose groups tend to have low power but neat special abilities), this can be just the thing.

Warehouse 23: Good place to store your Center for Weird Studies and other such knickknacks. Don't keep anything too valuable in there, though, since it is vulnerable to abuse like any other Resource.

Flying Saucer: Just plain useful if your evil plans involve more than two Resources. Especially if you need a key one!

Trading Card Games: This makes everyone almost too paranoid. If you can pull it off though, replacing it with something like the Libertarians (which can provide a quick power boost) or nearly any other ‘surprise' card can do the trick.

Table Placement: An astoundingly Illuminated trick is to sit to the right of a particularly gung-ho player, especially one that tends to go straight for their Goal or who, frankly, annoys the other players. When they expend their actions, probably with your help, to stop this person you can follow up with your own victory attempt!

The End (aka Making Your Victory Stick and Stay Stuck)

Just a couple of things to watch out for in the the post-victory attempt aftermath that your rivals will host for you.

Except for China, it's a good idea to avoid Places that might be vulnerable to Disasters. Remember that Devastated places do not count for victory conditions!

Keep a plot negater or two handy for the end game. This is your main defense against your opponents! If you have the Nuclear Power Companies, that is another avenue of frustration for your foes.

Voodoo Economics: After a heavy round of takeovers, this will let you protect your power structure. For added fun, use a Nevermore! on it immediately after use. Since you are going for the gusto on what you hope to be your last turn, you can spend your undrawn plots with a glad heart.

Center for Weird Studies: You can use this to reload any Group or Resource. Since Illuminati tokens are at a premium in the end game, this could be a lifesaver, but its flexibility makes it valuable in many other situations.

Alignments: Remember that if you don't have the OMCL, then probably your rivals have it. Can your plans succeed if they have the Gay Activists?

NWO: Apathy: Very good for breaking up those temporary coalitions that will inevitably form on your winning turn.

Getting the right cards: Anything that lets you select or draw additional cards is a big help. Warehouse 23, Crystal Skull, Crop Circles, Mossad, etc. will let you grow faster or, more Illuminatedly, have the right plots in hand for the critical moment. Try this Illuminated trick: Get Savings & Loan Scam (or two if you can) when you have the Crystal Skull.

These small ideas should be enough to get started. There are a lot more ways to be sneaky. (Hey, I had to leave some for myself, right?) Watch out for the basic principles:

1) Don't look like you are going to win.
2) Organize yourself so that you can go for a surprise win in a single turn.
3) Leave your structure in a defensible position.

When you get right down to it, there are three things that will help you win: power, diplomacy and deception. Of the three, frankly, deception will take you the farthest. Remember, what they don't know . . . is exactly the way you want it.

by Andy Vetromile

Art by Kurt Brugel

"Don Fedello?" Arthur Creaseman stepped into the dimly-lit lounge. He removed his hat respectfully and waited. He knew he'd been noticed, now he was waiting to be acknowledged. Across the room behind a sizable mahogany table and a hefty helping of shrimp scampi, sat Ermine Fedello, the most powerful man in the city.

Fedello was at least 80 years old -- how much older, no one could say. His birth records were a 75-year-old memory, left behind in Europe when he made the trip to Ellis Island. He was a lean figure, a scarecrow in a dinner jacket with skin stretched drum-tight over a fragile skull. The only features of importance left to Fedello's head were the eyes, which now rose from his lunch to fix Creaseman to the spot. Age had diluted neither his appetite nor the force of his personality.

"Come in, Artie, come in," Fedello bade Creaseman absently. He gestured to the other side of the table as if to indicate Creaseman should have a seat, but there was no chair. Arthur inhaled and stepped forward. "I understand there's a little -- how'd you put it? -- glitch in the casino."

Creaseman's lungs would not release his breath. "Yes, Don Fedello, but my men have assured me it's just an electrical problem. A day or two and . . . "

" . . . and I will have lost nearly a quarter of a million dollars in gambling revenue," Fedello finished, spearing another shrimp. "Open the doors."

"But, Don Fedello," Creaseman choked, "If the tables continue to lose anyway, opening the casino again . . . "

Fedello sighed huskily, then spoke as if addressing his remaining shrimp. "If the problem is not fixed in 72 hours, I will find whomever is skimming from me and remove them. Tell that to your men. I think you'll find it to be an excellent motivator."

"Yes, Don Fedello."

Fedello waved soundlessly at the door, and Creaseman found enough composure to bow slightly, turn quickly, and exit the building.

On the street, Creaseman tucked his hat back onto his head. His bodyguard opened the car door for him. "How'd it go, boss?"

"Not good, Carl, not good at all," Creaseman said, sliding into the back.

Carl's face screwed up in thought for a moment. "Anything I can get you, boss?"

Creaseman thought as well. "Fall guys, Carl."

"Your Number Is Up" is a ***GURPS*** adventure for campaigns with an occult or paranormal setting. It requires the ***Basic Set*** and ***GURPS Horror.*** It works best with 3 or 4 100-point characters, and can be easily modified for use with other systems.

The Story So Far

Mobster Arthur Creaseman runs an illegal casino in the subbasement of the Caspian Hotel for Don Ermine Fedello. Recently, the casino began a run of bad luck. One night, the roulette tables began to pay off big for the patrons. The next night, blackjack paid off. Then craps. In spite of the steps he took to cheat, Creaseman lost money every night. He tried to close the doors, but Fedello forced him to reopen and gave him 72 hours to find the problem. After that, the godfather would take matters into his own hands.

Arthur did what any mobster would do: started looking for patsies.

The Root of All Evil

Four years ago, the Caspian's site was nothing but a burned-out warehouse ghetto. Creaseman cleverly ran a secret casino in an underground storage area while the neighborhood was commercially rezoned. Jerry Penham, a student from a nearby college doing studies in chaos theory, wanted to test some ideas in the casino. He got invited through Lawrence Hawthorne, his roommate at school; Lawrence's father was a councilman, which gave the junior Hawthorne some illicit connections.

Creaseman watched Jerry all night. He was sure the student was trying to cheat him, and confronted him after the casino closed. Always the naive one, Jerry tried excitedly to explain his theories, and the unstable mobster bludgeoned him with a chair.

Arthur panicked. His temper always had him in the hot seat, and when he discovered the kid was the friend of a councilman's son, he knew Fedello would go through the roof. Creaseman and his bodyguard Carl hid the body until they could bury it in the new hotel's cement foundation. Lawrence, fearing the mob and scandal, told the cops he and Jerry had been drinking, after which Jerry had wandered off to the park.

The police weren't comfortable with that, but they had no hard evidence and were eventually told to back off by the councilman. Many assumed pressures at school made Penham leave town. The case is still open.

But Jerry is still here, haunting the place of his burial and throwing a phantasmal wrench into the mob's moneymaking enterprise. He plans to stay until Creaseman pays for his crimes.

Enter the Characters

It is assumed the PCs are all occult investigators of some stripe. Whether secretive or public about their work, Creaseman will still find them and send Ari Legato, his lawyer, to secure their services. Legato is a small, thin fellow with grey, swept-back hair. Other than a skill of 17 in Law, he is a completely average character. He tells the group:

"I have a client who is interested in having what he believes to be an (ahem) 'occult occurrence' investigated, in hopes of putting a stop to it. It is disrupting his business, and if you are discrete in your work you will be handsomely paid to end it. We will provide your fee, expenses, and any equipment needed. Would this be of interest to you?"

Smart PCs will question such a good offer. Legato hasn't been told much. He can tell them the following:

• The place in question is the Caspian Hotel (he won't mention the casino).

• Their benefactor is Curtis Calhoun. This is half-true. Calhoun runs the hotel and is on the books as the owner. He knows something isn't right, but he doesn't ask questions.

• Legato doesn't know the details of the "problem." He's just the mouthpiece. The reason for the runaround is no one wants the investigators to know about the mob angle, otherwise they wouldn't take the job. If they refuse, the attorney can up their pay. If they still won't take it and the GM wants them to accept, he can have the mob kidnap a Dependent as enticement. Remember, Creaseman has only three days.

Research on Legato, Calhoun and the hotel reveals little unless the party specifies they are seeking Mafia ties, and even then they'll need the appropriate Contacts. Calhoun is clean and loaded with business degrees. The hotel and Ari Legato can be connected, but the money trail is a long one.

Welcome to the Caspian

If they accept, the investigators will be taken to the hotel and given rooms. The Caspian is as fancy as any they're likely to have seen (at least on an occult investigator's paycheck), with clean plush carpets, impeccable style and service personnel so attentive you can't turn around without bumping into three of them. Once settled, they will be invited to dine with "Mr. Calhoun's operations manager, Arthur Creaseman."

The meal is served in a private lounge at the back of the hotel's restaurant. Arthur, with Carl looking on, engages the PCs in friendly conversation, avoiding the subject of the disturbances. He wants to know what the group does, whether his background checks were on the money and whether they're loose-lipped about their clientele. Then he takes them to the subbasement to see the casino.

Arthur Creaseman Arthur Creaseman

Thick-necked mobster, 45, 5'10", 170 lbs., flickering gaze, dresses impeccably, sweats when his tables lose.
ST 12 **DX** 12 **IQ** 13 **HT** 10
Basic Speed 5.5; **Move** 5
Dodge 5 **Parry** 3 **Block** 4
Damage: Thrust 1d-1; Swing 1d+2
Advantages: Patron (Don Fedello), Strong Will/1, Wealth (Wealthy), Status/1, Acute Vision +1.
Disadvantages: Bad Temper, Bully, Duty (Mafia), Paranoia.
Quirks: Hates Italian food; not religious; has a gun in every room of his home; doesn't mind doing his own dirty work; enjoys public radio.
Notable Skills: Accounting 15, Administration 14, Area Knowledge (Campaign City) 14, Drive/TL7 (Car) 12, Gamble 15, Guns/TL7 (Pistols) 14, Leadership 13, Streetwise 12.
Equipment: Glock 9mm (p. B208), cash clip, cell phone.

Creaseman is a bankable moneymaker but he's also a couple sandwiches short of a picnic. He thinks he doesn't advance in the mob's ranks because he's only half-Italian, but the truth is the mob won't let a liability like him get too far.

Arthur rules by fear. His hopes of succeeding Fedello as don are only a pipe dream; Fedello is the only man he's afraid of.

By day, Creaseman conducts business throughout the hotel. At night he's always in the casino sweating over the tables.

Going Down

At the bottom of the elevator, the party is led down a hallway and through a conspicuous metal detector and finally into the casino.

The large room is filled with gambling tables. A striking red carpet, brass fittings and deep-hued wood complete the simple decor. Fans hang from the ceiling and smoky bubbles hide the security cameras. There are no clocks. Along the back wall, left to right, are a large service elevator, a storage room and another hallway. On the left side of the hall is a private elevator. Only Creaseman has a key. On the right is Arthur's office and the security office. If the penny hasn't dropped yet, the adventurers should now realize they are working for The Wrong People. If they try to back out at this

point, Artie will forego upping his offer and threaten the PCs into cooperating. He doesn't have time to negotiate.

Questioning Creaseman

Arthur will answer the group's questions. He'll tell them about the unusual activity at the tables. He will not tell them about the 72 hour deadline or that he works for Ermine Fedello. If they knew he answered to a higher-up, he might not be able to leave them holding the bag.

During the interview, it should become clear that Creaseman doesn't believe in what the investigators preach. If they discover the problem, great, but they're here to take the blame. It's also obvious Creaseman doesn't seem concerned that the party knows of his felonious nature.

If they're worth their paycheck, they'll ask their new boss about unusual events on the premises: untimely or violent deaths, disasters, former residents. Creaseman's look momentarily darkens, and he'll reply, "No. If anything like that happened, I would know."

The party can then search the casino under the watchful eye of two goons. They'll report back anything juicy they overhear to their boss, but they won't crowd the PCs. The party will be allowed into all the rooms (including Arthur's office, though they'll only get to eyeball it).

Average Mob Enforcer

Faceless mob muscle, 26, 6', 170 lbs., dark suits.
ST 12 **DX** 13 **IQ** 9 **HT** 11
Basic Speed 6 **Move** 6
Dodge 6 **Parry** 4 **Block** 4
Damage: Thrust 1d-1; Swing 1d+2
Quirk: Suspicious bulges.
Notable Skills: Area Knowledge (Campaign City) 10, Brawling 12, Drive/TL7 (Car) 12, Gun/TL7 (Pistol) 13, Shadowing 9, Stealth 12.
Equipment: Smith & Wesson .38 revolver (p. B208).

These are the dime-a-dozen soldiers the mob sends out to break kneecaps. Any time the GM needs average thugs to throw at the PCs, he should use these stats.

Further Investigations

Here's a quick run-down of the people and places the team is most likely to get their information from. This is by no means an exhaustive list, but they are the most obvious sources.

The Casino

The party has the run of the hotel, but they'll have company wherever they go. They can check the casino during operation if they want; in fact, Creaseman will insist (video of them in the casino could come in handy). The hotel tailor provides evening dress if they have none. Arthur tells the PCs that, if guests ask, they should say they are personal guests of his.

If the PCs wish to have a private conversation, nights in the casino are ideal. The place is jumping so surveillance is tough, and their host has to put on a good show. His muscle can't follow the party without making other guests antsy.

The investigators won't be disappointed. Once the room has a good head of steam, Jerry will work his magic. The GM should pick a game that will make a nice dramatic impression and let the ghost go to town making it pay off. Any devices the group brought for measuring PK levels and such will register wildly if they can use them. This will be an

exercise in discretion. So much as a pocket calculator in a casino smacks of high-tech cheating, and their use will infuriate the guests. The party will get a good reading at the tables even during the day, but at night Jerry's voodoo will bury the needle.

During all this, Creaseman begins to pace and sweat with barely-contained anger. After the place closes, he'll demand that the party explain. Of course, he doesn't believe in ghosts or lame excuses, so he'll chew them out regardless.

The only other evidence is casino file video confirming Arthur's story.

The Word on the Street

Pavement pounding won't reveal much that isn't already known: the casino is in trouble, plagued by strange events, and may close. Most of the underworld believes Creaseman murdered Jerry Penham, but no one knows what he and Carl did with the body, so there's little reason to connect a four-year-old murder with the goings-on at the hotel. After all, Arthur's killed a lot of people over the years . . .

Following the Money

Now that they know the mob is involved, the adventurers may try any Contacts in the underworld or the law enforcement community. Meeting discretely with those Contacts may prove tough with Creaseman's surveillance (see below).

Neither the authorities nor street folk can connect Penham and the Caspian. What they can reveal is that Artie reports to Fedello, the city's premiere mobster. No one makes a move without Ermine's okay, and the hotelier is always on thin ice with him. Artie's not known for his stability, but he's an organizer and good at developing new schemes, so the mob keeps him around.

Something the GM should keep in mind about the authorities: if they find the PCs are in with the mob, however unwillingly, it may tempt them to exploit this "good fortune" to their own ends. Unless the characters want to play both sides against the middle, they should keep this a secret.

Straight from the Horse's Mouth

After Jerry, the next-best source of information is Carl Hanson, Arthur's bodyguard and accomplice. He literally knows where the bodies are buried, so he's the best bet for uncovering the cause of the phenomena. Carl's a terribly nice fellow, but he's loyal to the wrong kind of people. To tip off the characters that he's a potential resource, the GM should see that the big lug always has a friendly word for them and waves gregariously from the casino bar.

Since his boss invited them, Hanson assumes the party is, in mob parlance, "okay," so he's open to small talk about family business. They have to ask the right questions, though. Asked about any unusual occurrences in the hotel's history, he lets slip, "Oh, no, not since the construction." Carl's new friends must tread lightly. The subject of Jerry Penham is verboten, and it will take Fast Talk or Seduction rolls made at -5 to get him to open up further. Alcohol and the lateness of the hour will reduce this penalty, but a bribe will insult Carl and send up a warning flag even in his addled mind.

With the security cameras following the party, Artie will notice any exchanges with his employee, and you can bet the rent that when the boss asks him, Carl will spill everything he remembers. It might be prudent to finish off Hanson's short-term memory with an unrelated discussion, like asking him about his time in the ring.

Carl "Canvas" Hanson

Boxer-cum-bodyguard, 33, 6'1", 190 lbs., looks older than he is, suits always seem too small on him, fidgets as though shadow-boxing.

ST 13 **DX** 14 **IQ** 10 **HT** 12
Basic Speed 6.5 **Move** 6
Dodge 7 **Parry** 4 **Block** 5
Damage: Thrust 1d; Swing 2d-1
Advantages: Combat Reflexes, High Pain Threshold, Reputation (+2, fight fans, 10-).
Disadvantages: Duty (to Creaseman, 12-), Gullibility, Hard of Hearing, Overconfidence.
Quirks: Baby-sits his sister's kids once a week; has a satellite dish but only watches ESPN; won't use a microwave; thinks zoos are cruel; pays cash.
Martial Arts Style: Boxing.
Notable Skills: Area Knowledge (Campaign City) 10, Body Language 10, Boxing 15, Drive/TL7 (Car) 13, Running 12, Sports (Football) 13, Swimming 14, Tournament Law (Boxing) 11.
Maneuvers: Feint 17, Jab 15, Riposte 12, Roundhouse Punch 14, Slip 6.
Equipment: Brass knuckles, pictures of his sister's kids.

Hanson's heavyweight boxing career was cut short by deafness in his left ear and brain damage. The pugilist took a job collecting debts for Creaseman, but became Artie's bodyguard as paranoia set in. The two go everywhere together. At night Carl sits and eats peanuts at the bar while the boss mingles. Carl is the only person Creaseman trusts.

Carl comes from a fighting family; the PCs may even recognize him. He feels he let the family down, not by working for the mob but by getting thrown out of the ring. He's always glad to relive his glory days.

Ace in the Hole

Of course, Jerry Penham can tell the adventurers everything -- if he'll talk to them. He knows they're working for his murderer, so they'll have to convince him of their intentions. They may not even be able to talk to him without some psychic assistance (it will help if one of the characters is a sensitive).

Jerry's focus is the casino, and getting a medium into the subbasement is not going to be easy. Creaseman will want to know why the team needs a "new member," and he'll do a background check on anyone they bring in. They can't tell Arthur about the seance without admitting they know he's guilty of capital murder, and anyone the group brings in will fall into the shadow of the mob. Depending on the range, the GM may decide to allow the seance to work outside the hotel or on another floor, but being constantly under surveillance makes a sitting on the hotel doorstep unlikely.

If the party is able to prove their good intentions, Jerry may elect to spend some of his precious mana to materialize for them and parley.

Jerry Penham

Dead math student, 26, 5'9", apparent weight 155 lbs., thick glasses, pleasant smile, comfortable casual clothes.
ST 10 **DX** 11 **IQ** 15 **HT** 10
Basic Speed 5.25 **Move** 5
Dodge 5 **Parry and Block** NA
Damage: 0
Advantages: Lightning Calculator, Mathematical Ability.
Disadvantages: Curious.

Jerry was only a couple of credits away from his doctorate, and the experiment in the casino was going to be the basis of his doctoral thesis. He was a retiring, harmless young student before he was murdered; he's grown up a lot since then. Although he appears as he looked the night Creaseman did him in, Jerry's attitude is a great deal more antagonistic, especially toward anyone he thinks will stand between him and his revenge. His endearing innocence may resurface if he finds someone he can trust.

Penham mostly uses his magic to affect the roulette ball and craps dice, or to change one card to another when drawn from a deck. He isn't a powerful ghost, but he uses his abilities to maximum effect (see Ghostly and Demonic Magic

sidebar, p. H46).

Someone to Watch Over Me

Creaseman will keep the party on a leash during their investigations, but it's a long leash. He needs the party as patsies, so he'll rein in his vicious personality up to a point. If he thinks they have outlived their usefulness or stepped too far out of bounds, he'll do away with them.

He'll keep tabs on them through Clyde Revere, his tail-man. Clyde is very good at his job and he will report the group's activities and their lines of inquiry. If they split up, Revere will follow the largest group and send some thugs to watch the rest. These goons aren't as skilled as the tail-man, though, and will be easier to spot and lose. For Clyde, use the Mob Enforcer stats (above) with the following changes: raise Area Knowledge to 12, Shadowing to 14 and Stealth to 13.

The PCs' rooms are bugged and the phones tapped. Conversations are recorded and their content reported to Artie. Revere also uses this information to decide who to follow out of the building. Smart PCs will discover (or assume) this is going on, and will take the opportunity to feed false information to their hosts.

Playing Your Hand

Once they have all the pieces of the puzzle, what does the team do with the information?

They could tell Creaseman what they've found, but there are two things wrong with this approach. First, he won't believe it; in his most fanciful dreams, he wouldn't consider it possible. Second, he'll kill the party for knowing too much.

The police would be interested in what the party has found, but there's no way to prove it (Kirlian auras notwithstanding). The PCs have nothing concrete, Carl won't roll over on his boss, and no one's going to issue a warrant to tear up the foundations of a four-star hotel.

The truth is, the characters are pretty much on their own. The heavy-handed approach is to exorcise Jerry, which will entail the same problems with secrecy as contacting him; rules for exorcism are on p. H45. If they befriend him, he can help bring down Creaseman, though his abilities lie mostly in being able to manipulate the tables (and even those will peter out the further he gets from his focus).

The Trump Card

Ironically, the best ally the players have against Arthur Creaseman is Ermine Fedello. If they tell him what his puppet has been up to, he will be outraged. He already suspects his lieutenant has been skimming money, but even if the investigators let on about the supernatural aspect of their case, Fedello is much more imaginative than Artie and carries more Old World superstitions. He might actually believe them. The team will have to shake pursuit long enough to get to the don, but their tail won't cross the boss's boss.

Discovering a link between the two men is another kettle of fish. The don takes steps to stay out of the spotlight. Characters with a law enforcement background may know of him; otherwise Contacts and Streetwise rolls, at -3 to skill, will be necessary to make the connection. Or they can follow the money trail, at -5 to an Accounting roll. As a legitimate businessman, Fedello is easy to find.

Don Fedello **Don Ermine Fedello**

Ancient mob boss, 80 (?), 5'5", 105 lbs., skeletally thin, piercing stare, garlic on his breath, usually wears a smoking jacket or dressing gown.
ST 8 **DX** 9 **IQ** 14 **HT** 8

Basic Speed 4.25 **Move** 4
Dodge 4 **Parry** NA **Block** NA
Damage: Thrust 1d-3; Swing 1d-2
Advantages: Alertness +1, Ally Group (his crime family), Charisma +1, Longevity, Reputation (+3, criminals, all the time), Status/3, Wealth (Very Wealthy).
Disadvantages: Addiction (tobacco), Addiction (pain pills), Enemies (Opposing Mafia family and FBI tag teams, 9-), Stubbornness.
Quirks: Overly generous to his grandchildren; keeps four myna birds; misses playing golf; doesn't use his doctor-prescribed oxygen; sends cases of bourbon as Christmas gifts.
Notable Skills: Accounting 12, Administration 16, Area Knowledge (Campaign City) 13, Cooking 13, Detect Lies 14, Diplomacy 14, Economics 14, Gambling 12, Guns/TL7 (Pistols) 13, Leadership 14, Savoir-Faire 14, Streetwise 12.
Equipment: Ruger STD, .22 (p. B208), cigarette holder, pain pills.

Fedello has been fending for himself since he came to America at about age 5. Always sharp, he learned flawless English, which allowed him to ingratiate himself into high society. This was his stepping stone to the upper echelons of the mob.

Now the most influential crime figure in the city, he monitors his organization with a tireless eye. Nothing happens without his say-so. Everyone expected him to die 15 years ago, but he continues to abuse his body, ignore his doctor and thrive.

The Wrap-Up

If the party thinks the don is too good to be true, well, let them. Fedello has nothing against them; indeed, he is in their debt and will honor their deal with Arthur. The PCs can tell the cops any story they like. The Feds haven't moved on the godfather yet, and they're not going to do it on the say-so of ghost chasers. Creaseman will disappear, and since it was his casino it can be disavowed or dismantled. If the team is a little more reluctant to start their cars in the morning, so be it.

Jerry Penham may ask the characters to take care of some loose ends for him: getting him a decent burial, setting his parents' and Lawrence's minds at ease, perhaps publishing whatever findings his theories produced. Then Penham will "move on."

Of course, it's always possible the group ran afoul of Creaseman and got waxed. If so, they can team up with Jerry and try to bring the mobster to justice from beyond the grave.

Other Adventures

Jerry could be an interesting NPC to keep around. The party will have to return to the Caspian Hotel to talk to him unless the GM frees him from his focus (in which case he might be a good replacement for any character who died during the adventure). He may even try to secure the party's services for other ghosts in need of occult adventurers!

Jerry lost a lot of naivete when he got murdered. Maybe he's more vengeful than the party thought. After he deals with Creaseman, he may go after the Hawthorne family. If Lawrence got married, the ghost could target his two year old daughter . . .

Perhaps Creaseman got wind that the party spilled their guts to Don Fedello and he rabbited. If he's alive, the group has a new Enemy. Arthur will regroup and plot revenge in classic fashion. If he saw evidence of the supernatural, he may change his tune and try to amass occult power. Now he's really dangerous. And if Fedello killed Creaseman, Artie may come back for revenge, too.

spells for a *GURPS Magic* campaign

by Joshua Roby

Mana begins its journey at a mana spring, a cairn or mystic site, which funnels or constructs (Thaumaturgists don't know which) mana and sends it into the world through ley lines, a crisscrossing network of conduits through which mana flows easily. The mana flows down these ley lines, forking and splitting, sometimes falling out through weak spots in the lines called nodes. The mana spreads out through the world, saturating it with mana, maintaining the mana level and allowing magic to exist. Below are the spells with which mages may manipulate this foundation of magic.

The Ley Line Spell College

Seek Ley Line

Tells the caster the direction and approximate distance of the nearest significant (1-point or more) ley line. Use the long-distance modifiers (p B151 or p M10). Any particular ley lines may be excluded if the caster specifically mentions them before beginning.

Cost: 3 pts
Time to Cast: 10 seconds
Duration: Instantaneous
Prerequisites: Magery
Item: Any headgear, or a compass. *Cost:* 60

Sense Ley Line

The basic Ley Line Spell. With this spell, the mage can "see" the ley line network around her. He will see all lines, nodes and springs within his line of sight, and have a general idea ("south" "downhill") of where the lines lead. This is not an overlay on his normal vision, though; it is an "extrasensory" sense. If blindfolded, the mage may be able to navigate a room by following the ley lines he'd already seen in the room.

Cost: 2 pts, half to maintain
Time to Cast: 10 seconds
Duration: 15 minutes
Prerequisites: Seek Ley Line
Item: Any headgear, or a compass. *Cost:* 100

Draw Ley Power

This spell allows a mage can draw power from the ley lines around him. It is a modified form of Restore ST, and may be substituted for it. A mage standing within casting distance of a ley line can draw from it one point of fatigue for every three points that he makes his skill roll by. When standing on a node hex, a mage can pull one point of fatigue for each point he makes his roll by. This amount is limited by the level of mana running through the line. The effects of more than one mage casting this spell on the same section of line (GM's discretion for whatever that may entail, one hex or entire line) are cumulative: that is, four mages can only pull seven points out of a seven-point line; if the first three pull two each, that leaves the last one with one point.

Cost: N/A
Time to Cast: one second
Duration: Instantaneous
Prerequisites: Sense Ley Line, Recover ST
Item: Any garment or accessory. *Cost:* 800

Ley Line Look

With this spell, the mage can "look" down a ley line and see from any point along it. Taking a -3 modifier, the mage can also cast spells in the area he is looking at, ignoring distance penalties. Every three nodes between the mage and the point from which he looks adds one to the cost of both the Ley Line Look spell and any spell he'd like to cast through it.

Cost: 2 pts, plus 1 for every full 3 nodes. Half to maintain.
Time to Cast: 10 seconds
Duration: 15 minutes
Prerequisites: Sense Ley Line
Item: Any headgear or telescope. *Cost:* 1500

Ley Line Map

This is the more developed version of Sense Ley Line. The mage begins by sensing the ley lines around his and where they intersect other ley lines, at which point the mage looks down those ley lines to where they intersect other ley lines, and so on and so on. The information gained makes a sort of mental map which the mage can refer to in planning spells. The distance a mage can see is limited by his skill roll and the number of nodes in the lines: he may see through as many nodes as he makes his skill roll by. If desired, the mage can also put extra effort into the spell: doubling the cost doubles the number of nodes the mage can see through. This also doubles casting time. The mage will remember the map as he would any map he studied for a minute or two.

Cost: 2 points, or more for extra effort.
Time to Cast: 60 seconds
Duration: Instantaneous
Prerequisites: Ley Line Look
Item: Any headgear, usable by mages only. *Cost:* 150.

Detect Ley Line Use

This spell allows the mage to sense whenever a ley line is being used. The mage must already have cast Sense Ley Line, Ley Line Look, Ley Line Map, or have Ley Eyes. The mage can only monitor a line he can see, through one of these methods. If another person uses that ley line in any active way (not Sense Ley Line or Ley Line Map), the mage will sense it. On a critical success, the mage will know the user's identity; on a critical failure, the mage may see "phantom users" or no users at all.

Cost: 2 pts, 1 pt to maintain
Time to Cast: 10 seconds
Duration: 15 minutes
Prerequisites: Ley Line Look
Item: a) Any headgear, usable by mages only. *Cost:* 150. b) Any headgear; usable by anyone, always on. *Cost:* 400. Note) The user must still see the Ley Lines, through spell or Ley Eyes, in order to detect use with either of these items. A simple solution is to enchant the item with these spells, as well.

Ley Travel

A mage armed with this spell can fly along ley lines at high speeds. A mage using this spell travels at the equivalent of Move 20, straight down the ley line. Acceleration, deceleration and turning are limited only by the mage's own physical constraints. Ley Lines do not always arc through the air, though. They are just as likely to burrow into the ground or go straight through walls. Unless intangible or something similar, the mage can't follow the ley line through solid matter, and may even crash if not paying attention. When ley lines intersect, the mage can turn onto the new one; this requires a "control roll" under this spell, but costs no fatigue (or a mage can use the Flying: Ley Line (PA) skill, instead). A successful control roll transfers the mage onto the new line; in the case of a failure, the mage continues on his previous course. A critical failure short-circuits the spell, and the mage falls to the ground (no damage unless mage is very high or going over Move 10; in this case, 1d-1).

Cost: 5 pts, 2 to maintain
Time to Cast: 10 seconds
Duration: 10 minutes
Prerequisites: Only Draw Ley Power and Levitation are required, but Sense Ley Line or Ley Line Map would be nice to see where you're going.
Item: a) Cape, ring, clothing. Usable by wearer only. *Cost:* 1000. b) Carpet or Surfboard *Cost:* 1000 per hex.

Mana Ley Travel (VH)

The more advanced version of Ley Travel, this spell allows the mage to translate herself into mana and travel through the ley line in this manner. The mage need not worry about his physical constraints or running into walls. Move is still 20. If the mage rolls a critical failure on a control roll, he falls out of the ley line and back into normal reality, and instantly translates back into physical form. Note that, at a high enough level, a mage can disappear into the ley lines and remain there for as long as he wishes; a mage in mana form does not need food or sleep; he can become a ghost in the machine . . .

Cost: 10 pts, 2 to maintain
Time to Cast: 10 seconds
Duration: 10 minutes
Prerequisites: Ley Travel
Item: a) Cape, ring, clothing. Usable by wearer only. *Cost:* 2000. b) Carpet or Surfboard *Cost:* 2000 per hex.

Create Node (VH)

With this spell, the mage can pull on a ley line and create a node. This will have two effects: first of all, all business down this line will be more difficult and the line below will carry less power. It may even stop altogether if enough nodes are placed along it (although someone might just create a new line going along a parallel route or repair the nodes (see below)). Secondly, the node will begin to drop power out of the ley line and into the area around it. The node's power is specified by the mage at the time of the casting; it is limited by the margin by which he made his skill roll. A mage with the "Draw Ley Power" spell can draw more power if he is standing in this hex. If the node is left alone for a long enough time (a few years), the area surrounding it may even turn into a higher mana area!

Cost: 5 pts per level of the node
Time to Cast: 15 minutes per point of the node
Duration: Permanent
Prerequisites: Draw Ley Power, Magery 2
Item: Any. *Cost:* 1000.

Create Ley Line (VH)

A major spell by which a mage can create a ley line for his own use. The created ley line must connect to other ley lines on both ends. This spell can be used to provide the mage with easy access to the rest of the world via the ley lines: a ley line going right past one's house, or even through one's study, is mighty convenient for the mage. Of

course, it's also convenient for others who might want to peep in or even show up unexpectedly.

The created ley line will contain no nodes (see Create Node, above) and will only transfer power between the two lines it connects with. Its strength can be as high as the parent line, minus one (to defer all the mana, the mage must set up his line and destroy the other; see below). The junction between the new line and its neighbors will be a node of a power equal to a third of the line's level. In order to cast this spell, the mage must be able to see both endpoints of the new line; this is usually done by casting from one end and looking through other ley lines to the second end. It will be a matter of days before the line is filled with mana; if a number of lines are created at once, it may take weeks for the entire network to fill.

Cost: 10 pts for every 100 yards the line will cover
Time to Cast: 10 minutes for every 100 yards
Duration: Permanent
Prerequisites: Ley Line Map, Draw Ley Power, Magery 2

Node Gate (VH)

This spell can be used to create a Gate between two nodes, making instantaneous travel between the two possible. The mage must be able to see both nodes to cast the spell. The mage must specify at the casting whether the Gate is two-way or one-way, and if one-way, which way it goes. The orientation of the gate can be changed at any time by the maintaining mage.

Cost: 8 times the cost of for similar-distance Teleport spell; same to maintain.
Time to Cast: 20 minutes
Duration: 1 minute
Prerequisites: Create Node, Create Ley Line, Basic Gate
Item: a) Any. Mage only. *Cost:* 800. b)This spell can be made permanent by spending 10 times the cost in the casting, which can be performed in a ritual manner, like enchanting an item.

Destroy Node (or Repair Ley Line) (VH)

This spell is used to "smooth over" a ley line which has a node in it. If completed, the ley line is cleared of the node and will function easier; power will flow through the area, and those pesky modifiers will be removed. Higher-mana areas which might have been an effect of the node may dry up over years.

Cost: 5 pts per level of the node
Time to Cast: 30 minutes per level of the node
Duration: Permanent
Prerequisite: Create Node, Create Ley Line
Item: Any. Mage only. *Cost:* 400

Destroy Ley Line (VH)

This is, rather obviously, the opposite spell to Create Ley Line. This spell allows a mage to tear apart a ley line so that it no longer exists. The possible applications are rather obvious. It costs surprisingly little to cast because in the process of tearing apart the line, the mage is washed over with the power it was carrying. In fact, for a full day after the line is destroyed, treat the area around it as one level of mana higher than it is. Any mages using Mana Ley Travel who are in the line when it is destroyed "fall out" and are translated back to physical form.

If this spell is used to destroy a ley line that is the only route between a mana spring (see below) and other ley lines, the ley lines will be rendered dead; the lines still exist, but no longer have mana running through them and cannot be tapped. Ley Line Look and Ley Travel spells will work on dead lines.

Cost: 5 pts per 100 yards of line
Time to Cast: 10 minutes per 100 yards of line
Duration: Permanent (although ley lines may regrow naturally, over many, many years)
Prerequisite: Create Ley Line, Create Node, Dispel Magic

Destroy Ley Network (VH)

A spell of mass destruction known by few, this spell enables a mage (probably group of mages, considering mana costs) to destroy all the ley lines and nodes in an area. The spell differs from the special condition stated in Destroy Ley Line in that this spell destroys all the ley lines, leaving no dead lines. The mage must be able to see all the lines leading into the area (he can use the lines he's about to destroy), but he need not see all the lines he's going to destroy.

Using this spell will probably make the mana level of the area drop, though this will take a while. The more immediate effect of this spell is that all the power running through the lines is released all at once. The ensuing chaos would be incredible; effectively a ridiculously high-mana area. In a high-mana area, magic is more loose. In the aftermath of this spell, magic obeys no laws, least of all the Laws of Physics. Most people in this area would be killed in numerous gruesome ways, and the few survivors would be maimed, driven insane, perhaps even twisted/mutated.

This is a complex spell, and it is even more complex to figure cost. It is based on the sheer length of the combined ley lines the mage will remove, and this can be difficult to figure. An easy cop-out is to just take the area to be denuded and multiply this by a modifier, based on what mana level the land is. Modifiers: very high mana: x13.5, high mana x5.4, normal mana x2.7, low mana x.54, no mana x.27. This will give a rough estimate of how many feet of ley line there is in a given area.

Cost: 5 pts per 100 yards of line
Time to Cast: 10 minutes per 100 yards of line
Duration: Permanent (Until the ley lines grow back naturally… in a century or so.)
Prerequisite: Destroy Ley Line, Drain Mana, Magery 3

Create and Destroy Mana Spring (Unknown)

Whether these two spells exist are almost certainly unknown in any game world. If they did exist, they would be secret spells and would have incredibly prohibitive costs and casting times: rituals lasting days and including a number of human sacrifices sound appropriate for the level of power these spells would require. These spells do make a good mystery or threat for the PCs to respond to.

New Advantage

Ley Eyes --10 pts

A character with this advantage sees all ley lines around his at all times, even in the dark. It requires no fatigue, and he can see everything a successful Sense Ley Line spell would reveal.

Ley Line Physics and Geography

Depending on how detailed the GM wants to make his campaign and how much he wants to bother with ley lines, the physics and geography of ley lines can be very simple to dizzyingly complex. Following are a dizzyingly complex set of rules.

Neither matter nor energy can be created nor destroyed, but it

can be converted. Light waves can become heat when absorbed, wood can be burnt into heat, uranium can become kinetic energy in a fission reaction. Mana, being energy, cannot be created or destroyed, but it can be converted. Most spells are the conversion of mana into either other forms of energy (Apportation turns it into kinetic energy, Lightning turns it into electricity) or matter (Create Water). Technically speaking, this conversion should be handled with the equation E=Mc2, using fatigue, converted into calories, as the energy, but this brings depressing results, so we will throw science out the window, something scientists do all the time.

According to ***Mage: the Ascension,*** mana is diluted Quintessence, which was broadcast from humanity's heads into the world and caught, collected and converted by mystic places like cairns. For those of us who are "magicians" and not "mages," as will be most PCs using these rules, the mystic places that convert quintessence into mana and called "Mana Springs" and are believed to create mana. (Thaumaturgists debate whether mana is really created or just constructed here, with varying degrees of force in their arguments. We will leave the Thaumaturgists to their arguments, though, and proceed directly with the game mechanics.) Mana Springs are rated for how much mana they produce; a typical spring produces 100-500 points of mana per second, though small ones can produce only one (or fewer) points per second, and larger ones more: the sky is the limit. Mana Springs will exist in high-mana areas, and the mana spring itself (if large enough to occupy an entire hex) will be at a ridiculously-high mana level, where reality really starts breaking down.

Each mana spring will have a number of ley lines running from it, which will split up the output of the spring. For instance, a 120-point spring may have one 50-point ley line, two 30-point ley lines, and one 10-point ley line running from it. These ley lines will run out from the ley line and split a number of times. The 50-point ley line splits into two 25-point ley lines, then one of those, a mile down the line, splits into a 15-point line and a 10-point line, which in turn splits into two five-point lines. Actually, these numbers aren't quite right. Nearly every split of a line is a node; the line is messy here and mana falls out. Nodes can range in power from small, dripping, one-point nodes to torrential 10-point (or more) nodes. The level of the mother line is split between the daughter lines and the node, so the 50-point line splits at a 6-point node into two 22-point lines, one of which splits at a 2-point node into a 11-point line and a 7-point line, which splits at a one-point node into two three-point lines.

If you think of detailing an entire network of lines that don't just run along the ground, but through the air and underground, you've got an idea of how dizzying this can get, but I'm not done yet. Here are a few more thoughts to complicate your ley network: How thick or wide is a ley line? The preceding has assumed that they are anywhere from a few feet to a few inches, depending on the strength of the line. This could be changed. There is no reason why ley lines can't join; two ten-point lines join at a three-point node to produce a 17-point line. Mana Springs may be aspected, making all the mana down the line aspected, as well. What happens when two, differently aspected (fire-water or death-life) mana lines meet? Or what happens when a line loops back and joins itself? If there are no other routes out, the section of line will fill up with mana over time, resulting in a sort of "Dead sea" . . . what happens to unused mana? Does it decay? Will the lines eventually burst under the pressure?

If mana cannot be created, then it can't be destroyed, either. Instead, it is lost into the environment—entropy. The energy isn't destroyed, it exists; it's just lost, unavailable for use. Each node dumps a little more mana into the world, where it is sucked up by reality. Various natural processes use mana. Places with "auras" about them that instill fear or awe are powered by mana, as are sites which are "unnaturally" beautiful. Gravity is completely mana-based; this is why no physical law seems to adequately describe it. Many plants and animals, especially in the microscopic world,

convert mana into energy along with the food they eat. Magical animals, like gryphons or dragons, use mana to fly or breath fire, etc. These may sound silly, but if mana exists, it will be used by the whole world, not just mages; and even the mages are part of this natural cycle, since they use the mana in their own ways.

The more mana that is dropped into the world, the higher the mana level. Areas with a large number of ley lines and/or nodes will have higher ratings than areas with fewer. This is why it costs less mana to cast spells in high-mana areas; there is mana floating about, fresh from the ley lines.

Ramifications on the Gameworld

Natural Geography may follow Ley Geography (or is it the other way around?), with riverbeds following ley lines, and mana springs gushing from the tops of mountain peaks. Animal life, some of which is dependent on mana, will congregate around ley lines, making the lines and especially the intersections and tangles into dense forests, swamps, or jungles. Human habitations, once they can manipulate ley lines, will undoubtedly be set at large intersections.

Depending on the depth of human knowledge of magic, ley lines have a potential to greatly change the course of human history. The ley lines will become like the railroad was to the frontier US: if the railroad/ley line visits your city along its route, you will be guaranteed a place of importance. If a city is bypassed, it is in grave danger of becoming a ghost town. A city may attempt to construct their own ley lines to connect themselves with the larger conduits, ensuring that they will survive (PCs could be called in to facilitate this).

Trade routes will follow or be the ley lines; communication and package delivery could be done via ley line. This is because the fatigue and enchantment costs for ley-magic are less than that of the costs for that of non-ley-magic (Travel Ley Line is cheaper than Levitation) because the existence of the ley line makes the work easier. A mage traveling down the ley line could simultaneously be casting Tap Ley Line to regain the mana he uses to travel, making it even cheaper.

Culture would travel faster, as with the railroad. Distant lands become not-so-distant when you can putter down the ley line to get there. Long sea-voyages between Megalos and Arraterre become a number of short ley-trips, hopping from city to city, sometimes straight over the ocean. The increased level of transportation moves fashion faster, and instead of backwater cities advertising "Fashions from Megalos" that are years old, the fashions are introduced almost simultaneously the world over. Technology's progress may increase as ideas are exchanged at a faster rate.

In war, large battles might be fought over ley lines and nodes, and occupied ley lines guarded closely (or blocked with nodes) to prevent enemy penetration. Large complexes of ley-lines become positions to be envied. The goal of an entire war might be to capture one mana spring.

The existence of ley lines will also beef up the impact of general magic on the world. It becomes easier to enchant magic items when the power put into them can be pulled out of ley lines instead of waiting for powerstones to be recharged; consequently, there will be more magic items out there.

Managing Ley Lines in a Campaign

Ley Line Geography can be simplified easily:

1) All ley lines can be of a uniform power (say, 10) and all nodes set at an equal level (say, 2).

2) Ley Lines can run exclusively along the ground, or their height can be ignored (in this instance, they radiate out of the core of the planet and are ley planes, but this is supposed to simplify things...)

3) Mana springs need not even exist, and the ley lines can just run hither and yon with no rhyme or reason.

4) Ley Lines may be only straight lines.

If the "Ramifications on the Game World" sound horrible to you, simply add more nodes to the ley network. Travel and communication become more difficult, and the speed of the railroad peters down to only slightly faster than the horse or becomes too difficult, and not practical for such frivolous uses as moving fashion designs (though a quick look at history will reveal that humankind has an amazing ability to put new advances to frivolous ends).

PCs will generally not know many of the spells in this college; it is the sort of college (like Enchant and Meta-magic) which is used by elder, experienced mages. The spells in this college can easily unbalance a carefully-constructed adventure by letting PCs tap great amounts of mana, letting them see or appear at places where they shouldn't be allowed or even know about. If the ley lines are too powerful, reduce their strength. The simple addition of nodes will prevent short-circuiting of adventures: mages often protect their own section of ley-line networks by adding a succession of nodes on a short piece of line. Anyone trying to see in or travel in would have to overcome a great deal of interference to do so.

Ley Lines can easily complicate—and therefore make more interesting—any game world. The addition of the Ley Line College can extend (and restrict) the power of mages. Ley Lines can be used to make the world (Yrth, for example) go faster than a normal, medieval setting. Travel becomes easier, enchanted items become cheaper, and the mages may be looking over your shoulder via a convenient ley line ...

by Terry Pratchett and Phil Masters

Art by Paul Kidby

Zombies

"Zombies" are defined here as any dead people who have been re-animated, generally with the original mind in control, but without any change to the fundamental fact of their being dead. Usually, this is the result of a spell favoured by voodoo witches, but similar results can be achieved in several ways, including the creation of magical mummies. They have more in the way of free will and personality than their counterparts on other worlds, but a rather marginal place in the Disc scheme of things. Zombies are all obvious walking corpses, which humans may just tolerate, but generally find distasteful. They are hard to kill, being dead already, and usually very strong; they are powered by a combination of magic and willpower, not by conventional biological processes. They have an (exaggerated) reputation for tearing people in half. Because their glands don't do very much any more, they behave in a calm, even lethargic way, although they do not necessarily lose all their emotions.

Zombies' main problem is that, although they can withstand a lot of damage, and even be stitched back together again afterwards, they do not heal the way that living things do, and cannot use magical effects or stolen life-energy to patch themselves up like vampires. Thus, over time, however careful they are, they deteriorate. In short, bits fall off, and cannot always be found for replacement. Zombies who have been created by powerful magical adepts for important long-term purposes may last for years; unimportant servitors may only get months. Eventually, their entire body goes to pieces, at which point, Death shows up to complete the deferred job.

Zombie Character Package

Zombies have +5 ST (60 points), -2 DX (-15 points), and +8 Hit Points (40 points). Their advantages are Composed (5 points), Doesn't Breathe (20 points), Doesn't Eat or Drink (10 points), High Pain Threshold (10 points), Immunity to Disease (10 points), Immunity to Poison (15 points), and Injury Tolerance (the full set: no blood, brain, cutting or impaling bonus, neck or vitals: 50 points). Their disadvantages are Ugly Appearance (-10 points), No Body Heat (-5 points), Odious Personal Habit (some smell of grave-soil or decay, bits fall off: -10 points), Pallor (-10 points), Social Stigma: Undead (-10 points), Unhealing (-20 points), and Unnatural Feature (prominent stitching: -5 points). It costs a basic 135 points to play a zombie. Note that many buy their ST up, and many more have special Vulnerabilities linked to the way they were created. For example, the traditional voodoo spell often creates zombies with a vulnerability to direct contact with salt (usually two levels, rare: -10 points), while a mummy may well have the traditional problem with fire, which can ignite the resins and dry bandages that have been used to preserve the body (at least one level, occasional: -10 points). The extra hit points represent the fact that a zombie has to be hacked to pieces to slow it down; zombies may buy these up or down.

Damage and Repairs: The zombie Unhealing disadvantage takes the lower possible value, because zombies can be repaired. Unfortunately, effective healing magic is rare on the Disc, but a zombie can be stitched back together, at which point, normal healing rules apply. Small repairs -- a point or two of damage -- can be handled by anyone with a strong stomach and a needle and catgut, or by the zombie itself if its hands are still attached; larger amounts of damage may require an IQ roll, or even basic knowledge of Physiology, at the GM's option. Also, for every 5 full hit points lost before repairs are possible, the zombie loses one hit point *permanently*. This represents the inevitable process of deterioration. GMs may, if they wish, apply additional minor physical disadvantages to deteriorating

zombies, such as Missing Digit, along with worsening appearance. The zombie does not get any extra points for these.

Incidentally, a mummy, or any zombie specially prepared to guard a spot for centuries, may have the Unaging advantage (15 points). Most, however, decay and deteriorate with time, and hence are subject to the ageing rules for convenience. Treat their starting age as that of the original human.

Zombie Build: Zombie height and weight are not very closely related to their ST, which is magical rather than biological in origin. They can be given any values that would be plausible for a human. They tend to lose weight as time goes by; at best, their flesh shrivels, while at worst, large bits fall off.

Playing a Zombie: Zombies are free-willed creatures, but they have an obvious problem in long-term campaigns; they slowly but surely fall apart. Of course, some games minimise violence, but zombies have equally wearisome problems with social skills. They are probably best limited to tongue-in-cheek "monster club" games, or one-off scenarios. (They also have a fairly high points cost, but it's rarely hard to find additional disadvantages for a zombie character.)

It might just be possible for a voodoo-working PC to bring another PC back from death as a zombie, although GMs are perfectly entitled to rule this out. (Generally, on the Disc, dead means dead; undeath is something that happens to other people.) If it does happen, add the above package to the original character, using unspent experience and reducing characteristics as necessary to balance their points total. The GM should not then be shy about having the zombie PC hacked about in melees until it finally dies completely; death can be deferred, but not avoided forever.

NPC Zombies: A zombie can either still be bound by the magic or other supernatural event that created it, or can be at a loose end. In the former case, its role in any plot is usually pretty simple, and tends to involve lurching at somebody until hacked to pieces. "Guardian" zombies rarely have particularly good weapon skills, but when they connect, the target notices. If not obliged to attack immediately, they may turn out to be willing to talk, and this can present ingenious adventurers with opportunities.

"Independent" zombies are one of the Disc's less happy minority communities; for all their physical power, they are not best placed to enjoy (un)life. They generally need some objective or self-appointed mission to keep them going; otherwise, it is all too easy for them to lie down and give up. A zombie with a (probably faintly ludicrous) self-appointed role in life can add an interesting twist to many plots.

Zombie (VH) Regular

*Note: Zombie creation on the Disc is a complex process, not much like the **GURPS Magic** spell (p. M73). Other, accidental effects can also lead to the creation of zombies and similar beings, but this is the deliberate version.*

This spell is known to voodoo experts and a few others, mostly determinedly evil or warped wizards; it may require an Unusual Background for anyone but a voodoo expert to learn, as most other spell-casters regard it with distaste. For that matter, so do most ordinary folk; zombies themselves may be tolerated, but zombie-makers tend to suffer from -4 Reputations and neighbours with flaming torches.

Creation of a zombie requires a recently-dead human or dwarf body. (It does not appear to work with trolls, although a variant spell might be possible; animals lack the life-energy in their souls to empower the result.) It also requires a collection of exotic plant extracts and bizarre ingredients, costing about $100 per casting in locations such as Ankh-Morpork, but less in voodoo-rich tropical areas such as Genua. If some of these can be administered to the subject no more than twenty-four hours *before* death, the spell is cast at +3. The spell "recalls" the dead person's spirit from whatever afterlife it might have gone to, and re-binds it to their body, using its supernatural energy to empower the resulting zombie. It is cast at -1 for every half-hour that has past since the person's demise, as the delay makes the spirit harder to recall, and the body

becomes more decomposed and less useful. A failure means that it is impossible for anyone to make a zombie out of this corpse.

To determine the abilities of this undead being, begin by adding the zombie package (p.00) to the original character. Then, subtract 50 points from the character total to reflect lost memories and abilities; for every point that the spell roll was made by, the zombie gets 10 points back, so a roll made by 5 or better means no loss of points. Lost points are taken away by the GM, and usually come off DX, IQ, and possibly Hit Points. A critical success on the spell roll gives the zombie +50 points, usually spent on ST or hit points. When the zombie awakens, roll a Quick Contest between the Will of the caster and that of the zombie. If the caster wins, the zombie must obey her instructions; this could be considered an Involuntary Duty, and may even give it a Slave Mentality (especially on a critical success for the caster), but neither gives the zombie any extra points. In the event of a tie, the zombie must obey for now, but gets another chance to break free with a Quick Contest every month thereafter, until it succeeds or the caster wins with a critical success. Any zombie may attempt to break free if its instructions ever go strongly against its nature, but merely dangerous or self-destructive instructions are not sufficient; the order must contradict a major Psychological Limitation.

If the zombie breaks the spell-caster's control, it becomes a free-willed being. Roll a reaction, with modifiers according to its personality, to determine its opinion of the spell-caster. It might be grateful for the chance of a new (un)life, or it might be outraged and attack.

A Further Note: Contrary to some beliefs, Death does not show up for the character who becomes a zombie until the zombie is destroyed. It's a matter of destiny or something. Therefore, logically, if Death is known to have shown up for someone, they cannot be made into a zombie; the spell automatically fails. GMs may use this as a plot device. It would also be possible for gods and beings of similar power to prevent individuals becoming zombies by whisking their souls off to an afterlife as soon as possible, insisting that Death should show up at that point. Getting too deep into the theory of Disc spirituality beyond this is just likely to lead to headaches.

Cost: 10.
Time to cast: 10 minutes.
Prerequisites: Magery 2, Sense Life, Persuasion, Enchantment, Lend Strength, Rejoin, and ten other spells of any type.

Bogeymen

Bogeymen are a true *race* of Personifications. It is unlikely that they actually breed; they probably just pop into existence when belief reaches a critical threshold in an area. They embody the childish fear of scary monsters under the bed or in the cellar, and do so very competently.

Bogeymen are not actually evil; it is simply their nature to hide in dark corners, frightening people, and perhaps occasionally to jump out. They can no more help this than a troll can help being made of rock. Some could even be called shy or retiring; after all, their main attribute *is* the ability to remain hidden. However, they are no nicer than other races, either, and many actively enjoy being a nuisance.

Bogeymen look the part. They are hideous, shaggy creatures, with fangs, claws, and dinner-plate eyes. Or so most accounts go, although even those who meet one rarely get a clear view of a bogeyman. Humans might be grateful for bogeymen's preference for lurking in the dark, except of course that they perpetually seem to be threatening to jump out. They certainly have the equipment to be dangerous in a fight, although they rarely use it.

Bogeymen have the ability to get into hiding places without apparently crossing any intervening space (although sometimes, when among friends, they ask people not to look while they move). This can be treated as low-level psionic teleportation, but it is an innate ability; there is no reason to think that they have any other psionic powers. (On the other hand, a really *competent* bogeyman might be able to read minds to find out what worries people . . .) They can also see in pitch darkness.

Bogeymen live on rats, spiders, and other edible stuff that they find under the stairs and in the backs of disused

wardrobes. They are clearly not fussy eaters.

Bogeymen are not exactly subtle, by and large, but nor are they actually the monsters they appear. They are simply professional lurkers-in-the-dark. This could make them far more interesting and useful as contacts than as opponents; after all, someone trying to solve the Mystery of the Murder in the Mansion might well learn a lot from the creature that was hiding under the stairs when the duke fell down them.

Bogeyman Character Package

Bogeymen have +7 ST (80 points), Cast Iron Stomach (15 points), short Claws (+2 damage on attacks: 15 points), Dark Vision (25 points), Fangs (bite does impaling damage: 10 points), Light Fur (DR 1: 4 points), and Immunity to Disease (10 points). They have psionic Teleportation at power 6, with the skill of Autoteleport at IQ+3 (40 points). They also have the racial skills of Body Sense at DX (4 points) and Stealth at DX+4 (24 points). Their disadvantages are Monstrous Appearance (-25 points), Bogeyman Existentialism (see below: -15 points), the Odious Personal Habit of Lurking (-5 points), and a racial quirk; Loves cupboards and cellars (-1 point).

It costs 181 points to play a bogeyman. Some may also possess Psychic Invisibility at some level.

Bogeyman Build: To find a Bogeyman's height, add 3" to that for a human of the same strength; its weight will be 5 lbs. more than that of a human of the same (adjusted) height. Bogeymen are designed to look formidable. However, their weird appearance and habit of bending and stretching in strange ways makes it hard to judge precisely.

Playing a Bogeyman: High points cost aside, bogeymen are rather one-dimensional for extended play. Their disadvantages are innate rather than cultural, and can only be bought off with some kind of Unusual Background, and many also have Agoraphobia or a Sense of Duty to their function in life. However, if any player in a high-points-base game really wants to play a bogeyman, the GM is welcome to stand back and watch the ensuing weirdness. Few bogeymen add much to the above package apart from further disadvantages, although the odd psychological foible could be interesting, and even a professional nightmare can have off-duty hobbies.

Special Disadvantage: Bogeyman Existentialism -15 points

Bogeymen are formidable creatures, but as figments of childish imaginations, they have one big vulnerability. If everyone else in the room with them has their heads under a blanket, they simply and silently cease to exist, temporarily, fading back into reality Mentally Stunned 1d minutes later (provided that their existence is no longer being denied by then). If a bogeyman somehow gets his *own* head under a blanket, he goes into severe existential shock, as he himself can no longer believe he exists; he will stand around stupidly until 1d minutes after the blanket is removed, not even defending himself if attacked.

Fluffy blue woolen blankets seem to work best. The Ankh-Morpork Watch all carry squares of blanket material in case bogeymen cause them trouble.

Gargoyles

An example of high-speed Disc evolution in action, gargoyles are a type of troll that has developed a symbiotic relationship with architecture. They are filter-feeders; they sit around on building ledges, funnelling water from gutters through their ears and out through fine sieves in their mouths. They occasionally augment this diet with a passing pigeon, althouggh birds and bats have mostly learnt to avoid them. They are immensely patient; some do not move for years. They are usually quite amiable, but hard to talk to, as their mouths cannot close properly. They have names reflecting their lifestyle, such as "Cornice Overlooking Broadway" or "Downspout." Their ability to survive on gutter out-pourings is reflected by Cast Iron Stomach and Decreased Life Support advantages.

Gargoyles have +10 ST with the "Natural" limitation (66 points), -1 DX (-10 points), -3 IQ (-20 points), +2 Hit Points (10 points, 4 levels of Body of Stone, non-switchable (24 points: gives PD 1, DR 2), Cast Iron Stomach (15 points),

+2 Damage Resistance (6 points), Decreased Life Support (10 points), one level of Extended Lifespan (5 points), Extra Encumbrance (5 points), High Pain Threshold (10 points), 2 levels of Increased Density (10 points: gives +2 DR vs. crushing damage), Longevity (5 points), Night Vision (10 points), Reduced Sleep (10 points), Single-Minded (5 points), 4 levels of Temperature Tolerance (4 points; effects as for trolls), and Unfazeable (15 points). Their disadvantages are Disturbing Voice (-10 points), Fully Illiterate (-5 points), Hidebound (-5 points), Reduced Move -1 (-5 points), Troll Brain (-10 points or more), and Ugly Appearance (-10 points), and they have the racial quirks of Infinite Patience (-1 point) and Innumerate (-1 point). It costs 133 points to play a gargoyle.

Elf-Kin Character Package

The extra-dimensional race of elves are detailed in Chapter 9. In the past, during their visits to the Disc, these beings sometimes mated with humans, producing a number of bloodlines which are sometimes referred to as "elves," but which can more accurately be called *elf-kin.* Some such individuals can still be encountered -- either the progeny of recognised "elf" clans, or "throwbacks" produced by families with dark secrets.

Elf-kin have +1 DX (10 points) and Attractive Appearance (slim and graceful: 5 points), along with the racial quirks "Giggles a Lot" (-1 point) and "Sunburns Easily" (-1 point). They also have a reputation, which gives them +1 from romantics who would think positively of true elves (2 points), -3 from dwarfs and trolls, and humans who have heard certain rumours or had really bad experiences with elves or elf-kin (a large class: -7 points), and -1 from humans who just consider elven ancestry nothing to boast about (a small class: -2 points).*

Note: Full-blood elves might react to them at -3, considering them to be contemptible and pretentious mongrels, or might laugh coldly and treat them no worse than humans; as full elves are not widely encountered, this is not worth any points.

It costs 6 points to play elf-kin.

Elf-kin have neither the power nor the weaknesses of their full-blooded ancestors; in most cases, they are little more than thin, pale humans with a tendency to mildly unpleasant personalities. However, some of them may have inherited certain elven powers, although probably in weaker form. Thus, while this might seem a fairly pointless character concept, it does give a plausible excuse for all sorts of exotic abilities. On the other hand, being attacked by pretty well every dwarf or troll one meets is rather limiting.

Thus they should only be played with caution and the specific consent of the GM. Alternatively and optionally, GMs might permit characters with "a touch of the elf" -- thin, pale humans with a weak "wild talent" of some kind, and a dangerous Secret to keep from dwarfs and trolls.

Elf-kin might fit into the modernising world of Ankh-Morpork in the sort of professions where style is more important than empathy. One which has warped its elvish instincts into Fashion Sense could doubtless make a living selling *haute couture* to Ankhian aristocrats, for example.

NPC Elf-kin should generally be treated as a lower-key versions of elves, although it is not impossible to imagine one which favours its human heritage, and has a good side of sorts. An elf-kin might not become a pleasant person, but it might feel obliged to live up to other parts of the elf-myth; it could, say, possess an aristocratic Code of Honour. Heredity is not always destiny on the Disc.

By Terry Pratchett and Phil Masters

Legends of the Founding

Ankh-Morpork naturally has its founding-myths. There are two to choose from. The first says that it was originally built by two orphaned brothers who were raised and suckled by hippopotamuses (or, if you are an academic historian, hippopotami). Regardless of the truth of this tale, the hippo is the royal animal of Ankh-Morpork, and eight heraldic hippos line the Brass Bridge, facing seaward. It is said that if the city is ever threatened with danger, they will run away.

The second, which does not appear in all published histories, but which appeals to many visitors' sense of plausibility, is that sometime in antiquity the gods flooded the world, but wise men loaded two of every known animal (arthropod, mite, retrovirus, etc.) onto a huge boat and floated to safety. After a few weeks, however, the boat's manure load had sunk it to the gunwales and the rain was still coming, so the wise men dumped the ordure over the side. And that was how the city's foundations were laid.

The Great Wahoonie

The Wahoonie is a Howondaland vegetable that grows twenty feet long, is covered in spikes the colour of earwax, and smells so disgusting that it is banned in many cities. (It tastes worse, in most people's opinions, but naturally there are people who love it.)

Ankh-Morpork is often called "the Great Wahoonie."

Old Stoneface

Suffer-Not-Injustice Vimes, Commander of the Ankh-Morpork Watch and leader of the city militia (a bunch of stolid soldiers known as "Ironheads") in the revolt against King Lorenzo the Kind, was a stern and unrelenting man, whose nickname was "Old Stoneface." Strangely enough, Sir Samuel Vimes, current Commander of the Watch, has acquired the same nickname.

Many people believe that Sir Samuel is the descendent of the earlier Vimes; this has been confirmed by the Ankh-Morpork College of Heralds, who keep careful track of these things. (Other past members of the family apparently also went into the Watch.) Sir Samuel himself has studied the period with irritated interest, and clearly admires his ancestor, feeling that he did what was necessary at the time; he claims that "Old Stoneface" offered the city democracy, and that the citizens voted against it.

The people couldn't even bring themselves to execute the vile Lorenzo; he was a *king*, after all. So "Old Stoneface" took it upon himself to do the job. Needless to say, Lorenzo is now largely remembered as a romantic, tragic figure, and "Old Stoneface" is despised.

How the period of military rule ended is unclear; it is known that his side won the Ankh-Morpork Civil War, but Samuel Vimes considers that his ancestor was betrayed, and there are hints that he was executed. It seems that he was

too much of a puritan idealist, and too lacking in political skill, to really reform Ankh-Morpork. His tidy-minded military dictatorship lasted six months.

The Brass Bridge

There are a number of bridges across the Ankh, but the greatest and most noted is the Brass Bridge, with its eight wooden heraldic hippos. (There are four on either side of the road, all facing the sea.) It links Upper and Lower Broadway, the Patrician's Palace with the Isle of Gods. It is also the bridge which certain citizens periodically sell to visitors from the country.

The Seamstresses' Guild

Okay, this is a euphemism. "Seamstress" is the profession that determined independent women on the Disc are too proud to enter (as opposed to Rich Man's Wife, for which they are usually too intelligent, or crime, for which they may not have the talent or the morals), and hence is often mentioned by swordswomen in their biographies.

A survey of the Ankh-Morpork docks once found 987 women who described themselves as seamstresses, and two needles. The Guild, currently run by the formidable Mrs. Palm, is a small organization that monitors basic standards and looks after its members' safety interests, employing a number of trolls and two enigmatic enforcers, the Agony Aunts. (Cause too much trouble in certain "houses," and some very *strange* things can happen to you).

Non-PC though it may appear, the Guild is effectively a co-operative operating to the benefit of its workers at, as it were, all levels. Clearly, they say, such things will exist, and they should therefore be properly run, with a career structure and pension schemes and advanced training. In fact the result of all this has been to turn Ankh-Morpork's red light district into quite a peaceful place (the Watch will only arrest you if you cause trouble, whereas the Agony Aunts will stop at nothing) and likewise a man may enter any establishment in the knowledge that he is not going to be assaulted and beaten black and blue (unless his tastes run that way.)

Banned Guilds

Very few guilds have ever been banned in Ankh-Morpork, although the Patrician reserves the right to change things as he sees fit; certainly, a guild which seems to have lost control will find itself obliged to sort itself out -- or be sorted out.

The *Firefighters' Guild* was one that was prohibited; it started out on the basis that a small monthly payment to the guild would guarantee the attention of its members in the event of a fire, but that turned out to mean that they came round to the houses of people who *didn't* pay, and made Meaningful Casual Remarks. Protection rackets are one thing, as the Thieves' Guild would say, but fire in Ankh-Morpork is just too much of a general danger.

The Dogs' Guild

The Dogs' Guild admits only dogs who have been "bad." Members must have at least run away from their owners. The Guild controls scavenging rights, assigns loud-barking and cat-chasing territories, and regulates breeding. Its leader is called the Chief Barker.

While few PCs are likely to voluntarily choose membership in this guild, the nature of fate on the Disc means that temporary qualification cannot be ruled out, and in such circumstances one ought to be glad to have a strong professional association.

For a while, the guild was led by Big Fido, a canine fanatic. Big Fido was a poodle who dreamed of wolves, and whose burning insanity made him quite

capable of dismembering any other dog in the city; size, training, or breed were irrelevancies. Had Big Fido been human, the Disc would probably have been in serious trouble, involving jackboots.

However, since Big Fido's death, the guild has gone back to quieter ways, with fewer dreams. But many a flea-bitten stray remembers; it makes life in the gutters a little bit more tolerable.

The Rat Guild

The Rat Guild is only rumoured to exist, but if it does it would certainly have the largest membership in the city.

Mrs. Cake

Mrs. Evadne Cake is a middle-aged woman living on Elm Street, on the edge of the Shades. She is short, plump (almost circular), and short-sighted. She wears an enormous hat, covered in wax fruit and stuffed birds, all painted black, and carries a huge handbag.

She is a highly talented medium, well-connected with the Ankh-Morpork spirit world (such as it is), with at least one spirit assistant, named One-Man-Bucket. (She does not feel she needs a spirit *guide*, but sometimes a direct contact on the other side can save time.) Her paranormal perceptions also include powerful short-range precognition.

She has, in ***GURPS*** terms, at least two big social disadvantages. The first, little more than a nuisance, is that she tends to leave her precognition switched on, and set about ten seconds into the future, at which point it is completely reliable. It thus functions as Danger Sense, which would be more important if she were an adventurer; unfortunately, it also leads her to answer people's questions before they ask them. (She gets a headache if they then fail to ask the question she has just answered.) This can be very disconcerting. It can also be very difficult to play, unless the players are prepared to enter into the spirit of things; GMs should have her switch this power off most of the time when PCs are around.

The second is that she has Religion. In Disc society, attending many different temples is not actually considered wrong, but it is thought a little erratic. Mrs. Cake is very erratic. She not only attends temples, she tells the priests how they should operate, what to tell their congregations, and generally what to think. Her good works never cease, despite the silent prayers of a thousand clerics. She has what might rate as a -4 Reputation among the city's priests -- the whole Disc's priests, it is said -- except that they dare not say or do anything.

Mrs. Cake has a daughter, Ludmilla, who is a werewolf, shifting to a semi-humanoid wolf form one week a month. Ludmilla left home recently, in the company of a gentleman named Lupine. Well, he's a (rather hairy) gentleman during the full moon; at other times, he is a wolf. Despite the fact that they are only really *compatible* one week in four, they seem to have a working relationship.

Mrs. Cake's House

After Ludmilla left home, Mrs. Cake decided she could acquire some money and company by opening her fairly capacious house to lodgers. With her relaxed view of death, and experience of the practical problems of lycanthropy, she has found a gap in the market; she takes in undead, werewolves, and other supernatural beings. She is uniquely tolerant of people who keep strange hours, or who need a window left open for their return, or a spare change of clothes kept handy. Particularly strange PCs seeking accommodation in Ankh-Morpork may find themselves directed or drawn to Mrs. Cake's house.

The Y.M.R-C-I-G-B-S.A.

Newcomers to Ankh-Morpork who find good advice on where to stay may be directed to the Young Men's Reformed-Cultists-of-the-Ichor-God-Bel-Shamharoth Association, a charitable establishment which does provide basic rooms at an affordable price (about $2 a night). It is not quite as respectable as its founders hoped -- drink sometimes gets smuggled onto the premises, and some underworld characters use it when lying low -- but it is tolerable. These days, it is more often referred to as the Young Men's Pagan Association.

Dibbler-Analogues

In the time of Brutha, the nation of Omnia (p.25) had one Cut-Me-Own-Hand-Off Dblah, purveyor of dubious holy relics and rancid sweetmeats. The Agatean city of Hung-Hung has Disembowel-Meself-Honorably Dibhala, who sells fresh 100-year-old eggs and pork balls (on a chopstick). You can be pretty certain that every society eventually produces its own particular Dibbler variant.

Most Watchmen *are* better equipped than the street troublemakers they have to deal with, though some seem merely to be wearing a light coating of rust. Some of the trolls are probably no better off than they would be if naked, but that is adequate. There is certainly no rule that says a Watchman cannot spend his spare pay on better equipment, or his spare time mending and maintaining what he is issued. It also cannot be ruled out that a Watchman will show up wearing Kasgooble's Breastplate of Turning Expensive Magic Swords into String Cheese (its powers long forgotten, its operating instructions obscured by heavy verdigris), but don't hold your breath.

The Bleeding Earth

An original game setting for *Vampire: The Dark Ages*
by Jason Vester

Art by Clifford VanMeter

"My Lord?"

Emperor A'lanish XII reclined on the Throne of Roses, distracted by the drug-laced artery of a concubine. His Lasombran advisor whispered into his ear. At last the Emperor noticed the woman brought before him.

"Yes, yes. What is it?"

She was defiant, armor stained with blood. Two huge Ghouls, servants of the Gangrel Warlord who now knelt before the throne, held her. "It is as you requested. Tan Olya, Paladin of the Sun, is captured."

A glint of recognition shined in the Emperor's eyes. "Ah, yes. The last leader of a sad and godless cult. Tell me, Paladin -- any last, entertaining words? I recommend you beg for life. It might prolong things."

A tense pause followed. Then she lashed out, her kick folding a Ghoul in half. Her arm slipped free easily, drawing the guard's knife in one swift motion.

"Death to the Emperor!" she shouted. The blade hurled towards A'lanish's wide eyes.

There was a blur, a gust of wind, as the knife was plucked from the air. Before the cringing Emperor there now stood a dark-skinned Kindred, his body so gorged with blood that the whites of his eyes were red. He gestured to the guards, and the Paladin was impaled from behind on a great spear.

"That is twice now, my Emperor, that I have saved your life in as many days," the Assamite bodyguard whispered.

"Yes, yes," A'laanish agreed, regaining his composure. "That's what I pay you for. Now summon the death-merchants and pry all the secrets from this corpse. When the moon sets, burn her body and sacrifice the soul to our Lord of Night, Ometiatl."

The Advisor bowed low. "As you wish, my lord." The Assamite had already vanished.

Slowly, the court returned to its complacency. Later, the courtiers would whisper how close A'lanish had come to the Final Death . . .

The Bleeding Earth is a campaign setting for ***Vampire: The Dark Ages,*** inspired by dark fantasy such as that of Moorcock, Howard and Glen Cook. It depicts a world in which the sun itself has been extinguished by a war between gods, and Kindred rule openly as masters of Vampire Kingdoms. Entire populations of mortals serve as serfs and slaves. It is a world of visceral horrific symbols, a "Vampire's Paradise." But even amongst such darkness, light must shine, and the Bleeding Earth is threatened by a host of enemies lurking both within and without.

The Sundeath

The Bleeding Earth began as a sunlit world. Five centuries ago the god

Ometiatl ("Weaver of the Mantle of Night") made a dreadful bargain . . .

Ometiatl had long hated his half-brother, the Sun, but his previous efforts to overcome him had been thwarted. Through Ometiatl's sorceries, however, he was able to make contact with ancient powers that he and his fellow gods had managed to defeat, but not destroy, millennia ago. These "Abhorrent" were now bound in prisons crafted by Mayaquetl, Goddess of Stars. Through Ometiatl's sorcery, she was blinded and the Abhorrent were able to escape. In return for his labor, Ometiatl was granted great power. Striking by stealth as the Sun lay resting, Ometiatl slew Huixatiuh ("Fire Cage") instantly.

Only one of the gods willingly allied themselves with Ometiatl -- his daughter Moon, Tlazototec ("Changing Faces"). Her part in her father's scheme was to capture the mighty Lord of Waters, lest he come to Sun's rescue. Tlazototec had always exercised some influence over the mighty Ocean, and it was easy for her to charm her way into his domain. Striking by surprise, she bound Chintomapoca. She opened his veins with her sickle-shaped knife, weakening him, and whenever the wounds healed her servants re-opened them.

That day, the Sun did not rise. Man and god alike looked in fear at the horizon, wondering what had occurred. Ometiatl, surrounded by a mantle of terrible power, came before Chalcliotl, King of Heaven, and commanded him to cede the throne. Chalcliotl was wise, but also old, and his son Fire Cage had just been slain. Instead of fighting, he relented, and the god of Night reigned supreme.

Chalcliotl had always ruled alone, but Ometiatl chose to have a Queen. He asked all the goddesses to select one among their number who would join him on the throne, and all refused. But Ciuatetzal the Green Maiden knew that the people of the world would die unless she did something. There would be no seasons now, no Spring without the Sun. So she agreed to join her power of the Harvest and the growing plants to that of Night, and she became his Queen. In so doing, all that she was became twisted and despoiled, and she changed. Now she is called Clichitecutli, Bride in Darkness.

That quickly, it was over. With his Queen, Ometiatl rules Heaven. Most of the gods are reduced in power, served by small cults that scurry in the shadow of Ometiatl. Night's chosen followers, the Vampires, rose quickly to power. As the centuries have passed, however, the King of Heaven has grown self-indulgent and ignorant of his people's needs. He whiles away his time in mad revelry and strange entertainment. While he plays, his daughter's worship grows ever stronger. Some whisper that even the Sun itself may not be forever slain.

The Vampire Kingdoms

The Bleeding Earth is dominated by the Vampire Kingdoms, which arose soon after the Sundeath. The Empire of Ixtahuapan is dominant, but two others are growing in power and challenge it for supremacy. Countless smaller realms surround the major domains -- serving as borderlands or puppets.

The Empire of Ixtahuapan

As Night worked his plan to blight the Sun, he was in contact with his Chosen People, the Vampires. Within moments of Fire Cage's murder the mortal Emperor of Ixtahuapan was dead and a Kindred had taken his place. They multiplied in enormous numbers, and Ometiatl's worship was mandated throughout the land. Centuries of conquest bound all nations of the Bleeding Earth to Ixt through a combination of armed might and mercantile obligation.

In recent years the Throne of Roses has begun to wane. Emperor A'lanish XII mimics his divine patron, spending his nights in revelry and amusing tortures while Kindred courtiers busy themselves with political games, drug-laden Herds and the currying of favor. As the army shrinks, the Empire has relied more on elite Blood Companies -- mercenary units made up of Kindred and Ghouls, paid in blood and slaves. Some of the Companies trace their history back centuries, before the Sundeath.

Zumococan, The Queen's Realm

The greatest rival to the power of Ixt is the Realm of Zumococan, ruled by its terrible Queen. Tsarana is the chosen one of Tlazototec, and Moon worship is at least as common as that of Night. Insulated from other great nations by small petty kingdoms, Zumococan is aggressively pursuing more influence with its neighbors, more lucrative trade, and more worshippers for Changing Faces; conflict with the Throne of Roses may escalate to open warfare.

Queen Tsarana's greatest asset is her own fell beauty, which enslaves many of her Kindred courtiers. They compete with each other in efforts to please her. She graces the most successful with intimacy and praise. Chariots pulled by great albino lions form the backbone of her army; she also maintains vast levies of mediocre infantry.

Uzcapalocho, The Necropolis

On the fringe of the known world lies the island nation Uzcapalocho. Before the Sundeath, Merchant Princes of Uz were already growing in power, collecting vast wealth through trading and shipping. They have continued to do so under the new guidance of a Necromantic Council. Once majestic Merchant Fleets have undergone a terrible transformation, now prowling the eternal night as haunting Ghost Ships with crews of wraiths and skeletal dead.

Although the Necropolis' wealth and influence rivals that of Ixt, its Zombi Legions are unremarkable warriors. Uz is often unable to back up its interests with military force. Otherwise, it is a powerful rival to the realm of Zumococan. Although Ometiatl is revered, Kindred rulers of Uz also pay homage in a Cult of the Dead.

The Hundred Kingdoms

Beyond the borders of Ixt and Zum lie the Hundred Kingdoms of the northeast. These petty realms compete and war both in open and subtle conflict. No single nation has dominated despite an endless succession of would-be conquerors. Most are ruled by Vampires, though occasionally a powerful sorcerer or Ghoul warlord amasses enough might to sustain a reign.

On the Clans and Their Kingdoms

Clans are spread throughout the Kingdoms, gathered into political alliances called Houses. Many Houses in the Hundred Kingdoms are dominated by a single Clan, but the larger realms rely on a synthesis of Clans to combine their diverse talents. Each Kingdom has a ruling House, called a Dynasty.

Worship and the Hidden Cults

Gods and worship are critical elements of the Bleeding Earth, providing power, influence and wealth for both Kindred and Kine. Gods in this setting grant divine magic to chosen followers. The creation of these magical paths represents

the single most labor-intensive task for Storytellers in this setting.

Ometiatl's worship is the most widespread and organized religion in the Bleeding Earth. However, his allies are also respected, receiving homage from all levels of society, Emperor to slave.

Ometiatl the Mantle Weaver, King of Heaven

The Weaver of the Mantle of Night is also King of Heaven; his church is vast and highly regimented. All Vampire Lords pay him homage, every city has a temple devoted to him, and by law it must be larger than that of any other deity. Statues of Night grace palaces and squares. He collects prayer and regular devotion from most of the known world.

However, Ometiatl has let the distractions of Heaven pull him from the needs of his many followers. His priests no longer enjoy a level of power commensurate with his divine rank. Recent generations are forced to rely on obfuscation and trickery to convince the masses of their master's power. Night's daughter, Changing Faces, is particularly aggressive in filling the void left by Ometiatl's decline.

Changing Faces, Tlazototec

Tlazototec waxes greater every year, not just figuratively but literally. The moon's diameter and light has swollen as her worship has grown. A goddess of many aspects, Moon is both death and rebirth, blood and fertility. She always held some influence over the Lord of Waters, but now that Chintomapoca is her prisoner, the tides have risen dangerously. Her Chosen People are the Zumococan, who consider her equal in power to Ometiatl. The Lupines are her children.

Clichitecutli, The Bride in Darkness

Once the ever-young Green Maiden, the Bride of Night has joined her power to Ometiatl in a move meant to ensure the harvest even in a world without sunlight. After her transformation, the green plants turned blue, nourished by moonlight instead of the sun. Her new incarnation replaced innocent purity with haunting majesty; she has been as loyal to her husband as her tragic madness allows. Her most loyal followers are the serfs who till the land, eating blue-skinned fruit.

Minor Cults

A variety of minor cults support gods who did not oppose Ometiatl's rise. The Weaver tolerates them, but laws restrict their growth.

The Great Eagle, Chalcliotl

Past-King of Heaven, Chalcliotl is Lord of Sky and Birds. Aging, broken after his son's death and his own surrender of the Throne, Chalcliotl is too weak to threaten Ometiatl. Few do him homage. His priests are all but extinct. Only in the small Kingdom of Autlan, where Red Eagles are bred and ridden by House Tamuil, is he still revered.

Lord of Waters, Chintomapoca

Chintomapoca writhes in an undersea cave, bound by mighty chains that rise out of the sea. Sailors still say his name, but with despair instead of awe. His eternal wounds turn the Sea red; his painful thrashings threaten any who dare to sail. Only the Ghost Fleets of Uz dare make a habit of ocean travel.

Xiotloc, Lord of Beasts

Lupines call Moon mother, but the Lord of Beasts is their father. They are his Chosen People. Aside from a few hunters, his mortal followers are rare. Xiotloc is of divided mind since the Sundeath: nocturnal predators have grown numerous, but reptiles are all but extinct. Many of his children are food for Kindred and their religious rites. He has yet, therefore, to commit his savage strength to Ometiatl.

The Four Storms

The children of Ocean, these four gods are inseparable. Ehepochli is Rain, firstborn; her grief over her father's imprisonment ensures a nearly constant rainfall across the land. Mictpalotl, Wind, is next; she too howls her rage in fierce tempest and gale. The boys were last -- Ahexacamina ("Lightning") and Itzaucue ("Thunder"). They are most active in attempts to free their father, but even their efforts are so minor that Tlazototec ignores them.

Hidden Cults

Those that resist Night's reign find themselves hunted as victims of Ometiatl's Black Inquisitors.

Huixatiuh The Fire Cage

The Sun traveled his path for so long, that not even death could stop him. His feeble and dim spirit rises from the Underworld for a few hours in the middle of the day. Crossing the Sky, it turns the Night into a pale twilight. The warrior traditions of Huixatiuh have survived though his priests are without magic, and these Paladins of the Sun are feared enemies of Kindred anywhere. They know their god is dead, but continue to kindle a hope of vengeance.

Son of the Sun, Tlatlipilli

Some say Huixatiuh had a child, the Son of the Sun, who survived his father's death. Hidden among mortal followers, this legendary figure is now the subject of a scattered but devoted cult. Recent attempts by Inquisitors to infiltrate the cult met with failure.

The Green Maiden, Ciuatetzal

Before the Sundeath, the world was green and verdant. A cycle of seasons brought a healthy harvest to mankind. If anyone remembers the Green Maiden at all, it is the work of her hidden cult, which passed down its traditions from priest to acolyte for centuries. They continue to pray their goddess will recover from twisted madness. Until then Ciuatetzal hunts down these people as heretics.

Of the Lupines and Other Menaces

The Kindred may not admit it, but there are many threats to their rule. Some breed within their borders. Others lurk on the fringes.

The Wolf Tribes

Children of Beast and Moon, the Wolf Tribes are scattered and unorganized. Several have signed treaties with Ixt and other realms, working as hunters, trackers and scouts. Those who refuse to sign are captured for Royal Forests, where they are hunted for sport as "Noble Beasts." A few found refuge in the wilderness. Sheltered by their divine father, they debate the prospect of war.

The Barbarians of the Waste

Beyond the Vampire Kingdoms lie great unexplored wastes, where barbarians have eked out a lean existence for

millennia. Raiding parties strike out from these Wastes every generation but they are seldom large, and the Kingdoms have little trouble repulsing them. However, the barbarians exist in greater numbers than any Kindred dares imagine. They have come under the leadership of a Great Khan who promises them plunder from across the Bleeding Earth. An invasion is only a matter of time.

The Abhorrent

Ometiatl made dreadful promises when he released the Abhorrent from their prisons. The time has come to collect. Mortal oracles across the land foretell their coming, but those in the know cannot agree on a strategy. Some insist on remaining quiet, letting the Abhorrent and the Kindred destroy themselves. Others insist that alliance with the Kindred poses the only chance of survival. The debate continues, as the Abhorrent grow nearer.

Story Ideas

The storytelling potential of the Bleeding Earth lends itself to a wide variety of sagas. Here are a few campaign themes to get players started.

Manipulations

Focusing on intrigue and diplomacy, Manipulation campaigns allow players to create major Kindred courtiers in one of the Vampire Kingdoms. Scheming for power, embarrassing enemies, currying favor and watching their backs keeps everyone busy. Non-lethal conflict between players is the norm.

This Band of Brothers

The darker the setting, the brighter the light. The Band of Brothers campaign is a Bleeding Earth version of Robin Hood. A troupe of mortals fights back against bloodthirsty oppressors, hiding out in a nearby wilderness. Players are core members in a mob of poorly-trained but loyal peasants, and will cultivate rivalries with recurring NPC archenemies.

Freedom!

Heroes who want to make things right again join together as the nucleus of a full-fledged resistance movement. Rogue Kindred, Paladins, mortal sorcerers, Ghoul warriors and Lupines might join forces and engineer a plan to rekindle the Sun, ending the reign of the Vampire Kingdoms.

The Blood Companies

For a campaign of endless battle, murky morality and dangerous espionage, ask players to create characters that form the core cadre of a Blood Company. These elite mercenaries have no shortage of work, don't care which side their fighting for, and always fulfill the letter of their contract. They also get the dirtiest work: rooting out rebellion, bodyguarding Kindred lords, shock assault and infiltration.

The Desert Hordes

Only a handful of Kindred consider the desert tribes to be dangerous, but everyone learns the truth when the Khan's muster is complete. Players may be on either side of the invasion -- as Kindred who try to hold the Horde off long enough to organize defenses, or as the Khan's men, pillaging blood-drinkers grown soft on "civilization."

Lovecraftian Horror

Little is known of the Abhorrent, but their star rises. Soon all the powers of the Bleeding Earth may be unable to stop them. Players may create an alliance of Vampire Kingdoms, mortal rebels and Lupines, or get the Kindred to fight for them while cleaning up what's left. The Abhorrent are served by swarms of wild-eyed cultists, but knowledge is the key to ultimately returning these beings to their prison.

A Final Note

Remember, all the usual character-driven stories can take place on the Bleeding Earth, but with a stronger horror factor. Friends and family are still kidnapped, heroes are still framed for crimes they didn't commit, enemies still seek revenge. This time, however, the story takes place before a backdrop of wild, baroque, dark fantasy.

Fictional settings such as the Bleeding Earth remove limits on the characters. Much of a traditional Vampire game is about lurking in shadows, acting without attracting mortal attention. But here, players can change the course of Kingdoms, reveling in inhumanity if they choose.

Good luck. Enjoy the scenery.

by Terry Pratchett and Phil Masters

Art by Paul Kidby

Ajandurah's Wand of Utter Negativity

This ancient magical device has nothing to do with fairy godmother wands, being more the sort of thing that wizards go for -- although actually, it makes even wizards nervous. Unseen University has prohibitions on such weapons. (Basically, think how a loaded assault rifle with grenade launcher and bayonet would go down in a university engineering department. They might be able to tell you how it *worked,* but would rather not have it waved around when they were trying to have a peaceful chat.) A very few are known around the Disc, showing up in the armouries of people with more mana than sense.

The wand has the simple ability to annihilate any matter, living or inert. (Wizards say that it makes the target somehow *never have existed,* but that may be a slight exaggeration.) It requires Magery to use, and costs one energy point (from fatigue, a staff, or whatever) to destroy up to 300 lbs. of mass up to a hundred feet away. Increasing its range costs one extra energy per hundred feet added, and larger targets cost +1 energy per extra 150 lbs. of mass. The control is fine enough to destroy part of a target (such as a single limb) and leave the rest intact; an IQ roll may be required in such cases, at the GM's option.

These wands may go back to the time of the Mage Wars; the spells needed to create them are not currently known on the Disc, and anyone researching the topic would probably be subject to pre-emptive psychological treatment (involving a few fireballs) by other wizards. No standard price can be quoted for the item; trading in such things is a bit like dealing in weapons-grade plutonium -- you get the best deal you can, and you probably don't really want to do business with anyone who wants to do this sort of business.

The Creations of "Numbers" Riktor

"Riktor the Tinkerer" was a lecturer at Unseen University who firmly believed that the universe could be understood in terms of pure number, and indeed that it *was* numbers, at some very deep level. (He was obviously unusually rationalistic for an old-style wizard.) He built many magical measuring devices to demonstrate his theories; reproducing them would be a lengthy research project for a magical engineer. They included a Mouse Counter (it counted every mouse in the building), the Rev Counter (which did much the same for priests), the Star Enumerator (guess), and the Swamp Meter.

The Resograph

Potentially Riktor's most important creation, the Resograph ("Reality-Meter") stood at UU. It was housed in an antique vase, with pottery elephants around the side. The partly-octiron internal mechanism sensed distortions in the fabric of reality, and caused the elephants to "spit" small lead pellets in the direction of the event, to a distance in proportion to the size of the effect. Riktor calculated that a serious distortion could cause a couple of pellets a month to be projected a few inches. During the invasion of the alien Moving Picture imagery, the Resograph became seriously dangerous to be around, firing salvos of pellets at firearms velocities, before it finally exploded.

Magic Swords

Magic swords are traditional heroic appurtenances on the Disc, but most of them are rather old; they were generally originally made by dwarfs with Long-Forgotten Rune Lore, great wizards, or blacksmith gods. The first are, well, long forgotten, while wizards have long since gone off swords (which always seem to fall into the hands of heroes, who have an unpleasant penchant for using them on wizards), and blacksmith gods are usually employed these days improving the style of the balcony railings and door furniture around Dunmanifestin. Wizards also object to the rather erratic magic of many blades, which can scramble the calibration on magical instrumentation for miles around, and tend to arrange for such swords to be lost at every opportunity. Still, a wide range of enchanted edged ironmongery is available around the Disc, and some of it is even black, sentient, and possessed of personality problems. GMs are welcome to plunder ***GURPS Magic***, ***GURPS Magic Items***, and ***GURPS Magic Items 2*** for ideas.

Signs and Door-Furniture

A brass plate that speaks the name of the occupant of a house when approached is an old-fashioned, standardised piece of minor magical engineering, although of course it has to be customised for each user. It costs a base $200 in Ankh-Morpork, or any other town with a large wizardly community -- more or less for different sizes and qualities.

A door-knocker in the form of a demonic face that can talk, naming the inhabitants of the house, or announcing visitors to those inhabitants, costs about $500. It can be treated as having IQ 8, although it may be a little unimaginative. Such faces tend to have speech impediments, as they usually have a hinged brass ring though their nose.

Magically-illuminated "neon" signs are sometimes acquired by optimistic shopkeepers. They cost about $100 per letter for letters a foot tall; larger costs more in proportion, but smaller does not cost much less. They usually last 2d years (larger tends to be shorter-lived), then start buzzing and flickering.

Room Temperature Control Device (Experimental)

Recently suggested by an alchemist, and not yet on the market, this device consists of an invisible telekinetic imp that sits over a doorway or window and controls the movement of air in or out, permitting only warm air to enter and only cool air to leave, or vice-versa. Obviously, one such imp would be needed for each door or large window for the system to be reliable. The concept still needs work (the imps keep complaining that they can't see what they are doing, for some reason) but the designers are very hopeful.

Caroc Cards

Caroc Cards are used on the Disc for both divination and card games, including a hideously complex game of bids, partnerships, ruffs, and grand slams, whose name Rincewind tentatively identified as "Aqueduct."

The deck contains *eight* suits: Octograms, Turtles, Elephants, Swords, Sceptres, Cups, Coins, and Crowns. Each contains numbered cards from Ace to Eight, a Knave, Knight, Queen, and King. There are also the Major Arcana, which are dealt out of some games (but which are used in "Aqueduct"); they include the Ruler, the Star, the Importance of Washing the Hands, the Dome of the Sky, the Pool of Night (which may be the same as the Moon), and Death. (As in the terrestrial Tarot, Death does not always mean death. It's symbolic, really. Honestly.)

Caroc-readers claim that the deck contains the distilled wisdom of the universe (or the ancients). Other people -- even wizards -- mutter that this is rubbish. Shrewd witches regard the cards as a concentration aid that helps focus innate powers. Both fortune-tellers and gamblers require good dexterity, to shuffle a hundred-card deck.

Cripple Mr. Onion: This card game is played by two sorts of Discworlders; "Winners" and "Losers." It uses the eight Minor Suits only (you don't want to play with people who use the Major Arcana as well). It is similar to poker, with

an initial deal, then a series of betting rounds until all but one player have folded or the bets are equalised, in which case a showdown follows. One may also buy extra cards.

Combinations include the Two, Three, and Five-card Onions, Broken Flush, Double Bagel, Double and Triple Onions, Great Onion (the second-best hand), and Nine-Card Run (a nine-card straight flush -- the best possible hand). For quick game resolution, use Gambling skill as usual. Characters with ESP and Precognition may roll on that and add the amount that it is made by to their Gambling, but this does not guarantee victory; a truly skilled player is adept at juggling an assortment of uncertain futures.

by Scott Tengelin

Art by Clifford Vanmeter

Throughout history, humankind has believed that masks held mysterious powers, from the healing masks of shamans to the diverse animal masks worn by warriors. This article presents five masks with both ***Earthdawn*** and ***GURPS*** stats, but suitable for any fantasy campaign.

Eagle Mask

This mask, worn by the Knighthood of the Eagle, originated in the ancient Aztec empire. The mask is a full helmet made of wood, with the face of a human within the beak of an eagle.

Earthdawn

Maximum Threads: 4
Spell Defense: 14

Thread Ranks:

Rank 1 Cost: 200
Key Knowledge: Name of the mask.
Effect: +1 AR, +2 Str step for damage.

Rank 2 Cost: 300
Effect: +1 Spell Defense, +3 Str step for damage.

Rank 3 Cost: 500
Key Knowledge: Name of the last wearer.
Effect: +1 Social Defense, Fly (Combat speed: 60 / Full speed: 120).

Rank 4 Cost: 800
Effect: Shapechange into a giant eagle. (Use stats for the Chakta Bird, p. 289 of the ***Earthdawn*** rulebook.)

GURPS

2 PD, 4 DR in the head. Damage dealt by the wearer is increased by +3, and the wearer can use the following spells: Shapechange (Eagle), Fly. The mask holds 15 fatigue points for use of spells.

Shaman's Mask

This item is representative of the many healing masks from numerous cultures. It commonly appears as a stylized face with feathers about the edges, but can also resemble a frog, a wolf, a loon or even a spider.

Earthdawn

Maximum Threads: 3
Spell Defense: 14

Thread Ranks:
Rank 1 Cost: 200
Key Knowledge: Name of the mask.
Effect: +4 Per step for the Physician talent.

Rank 2 Cost: 300
Effect: +4 Per step for the Spirit Talk and Recovery talents.

Rank 3 Cost: 500
Key Knowledge: Name of the last wearer.
Effect: Wearer can exorcise spirits. Wearer's Wil step is increased by +4, and can make a test against the spirit's Will Power. Success indicates that the possessed individual is cleansed of the evil spirit.

GURPS

The Shaman's Mask holds the following spells: Minor Healing, Neutralize Poison, Banish and Cure Disease. It also provides 15 fatigue to cast these spells.

Magery or Clerical Investment is necessary to use the Shaman's Mask.

Deer Mask

This mask represents the many hunting masks worn before hunters went out the next day, and like the Shaman's Mask, is found in many cultures. The Deer Mask gives the appearance of a deer-headed man. Feathers and shells can be attached to the mask, depending on the wearer's tribe.

The hunters would wear the mask, and dance in a ceremony that took place the night before the hunt. The next day, if the gods were pleased with the performance, game would be plentiful. This specific mask summons deer, but buffalo, fish, seal and whale masks also are possible.

Earthdawn

Maximum Threads: 2
Spell Defense: 14

Thread Ranks:
Rank 1 Cost: 200
Key Knowledge: Name of the mask.
Effect: Summons 2d6 deer the next day. +3 Dex step for the Silent Walk talent.

Rank 2 Cost: 300
Effect: Summons 4d6 deer the next day. +3 Dex step for any missile weapon used in the hunt.

GURPS

Summons 3d deer the next day. Effective Stealth and any missile weapon skill used in the hunt are increased by 2. The Dancing skill is required to use these powers.

Lizard Mask

This is a divination mask. It appears as a lizard lying on the face of the wearer, its head rising above the head of the wearer. Two holes for eyes are carved into the shoulder blades of the lizard. The wearer will hear a hissing voice speaking into his ear, answering the user's questions.

Earthdawn

Maximum Threads: 4
Spell Defense: 14

Thread Ranks:
Rank 1 Cost: 200
Key Knowledge: Name of the mask.
Effect: +4 Cha step for the Empathic Sense talent.

Rank 2 Cost: 300
Effect: Answers three yes/no questions per day.

Rank 3 Cost: 500
Key Knowledge: Name of the last wearer.
Effect: +3 Per step for the Weapon/Item History talent.

Rank 4 Cost: 800
Effect: Learn everything about any person, place or thing (except true Name) once per week.

GURPS

The following spells may be cast by the wearer: History, Ancient History, Divination. The Lizard Mask holds 20 fatigue points for casting its spells.

Loon Mask

This mask gives the wearer power over the weather. It is constructed to resemble a loon stretched across the face of the user, wings folded, head pointing to the sky. Eyeholes are cut in the back of the loon.

Earthdawn

Maximum Threads: 4
Spell Defense: 14

Thread Ranks: 4
Rank 1 Cost: 200
Key Knowledge: Name of the mask.
Effect: Foretell the weather one day in advance.

Rank 2 Cost: 300
Effect: +3 Wil step for the Temperature talent.

Rank 3 Cost: 500
Key Knowledge: Name of the last wearer.
Effect: Cloud Summon once per day.

Rank 4 Cost: 800
Effect: Lightning Cloud once per day.

GURPS

The Loon Mask holds the spells Lightning, Rain, Windstorm, Clouds and Predict Weather. The mask has five fatigue points available.

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An alternative campaign for *Celtic Myth*

by Stephen Kenson

Art by Glenn Kristoffersen

Macha stood on the bridge of the Mannanan MacLir as the klaxon alarms sounded all around her. She watched on the viewscreen as the bulk of the Fomorian ship drew closer and closer.

"Our shields are down, Commander! Weapons-systems are off-line!" the weapons officer called out.

"Tell the crew to prepare to repel boarding parties," Macha told the communications officer. She turned to Connor, who stood with his eyes closed in concentration, an ogham stone held between his hands.

"What can you tell me?" she asked him.

"The Fomori are difficult to read, Commander," the druid's voice seemed to come from far away as he concentrated his mystical senses on the other ship, "but I can sense three boarding parties massing near the airlocks. They will attempt to take the ship, but I don't think they are planning to take any prisoners."

Macha had thought as much. She ordered Connor to coordinate efforts to protect the crew from any magical assault that the Fomori might try and bring to bear while she drew her own glaive and went to lead one of the parties protecting the airlocks. There was no way that she was allowing the Fomori to take her ship and she planned to defend it like a true Celt.

The ***GURPS Celtic Myth*** worldbook presents material for gamemasters to create new campaigns based on the ancient stories and legends of the Celtic peoples. One of the many crossovers described in the book is transplanting the culture and mythology of the Celts into a far-future Space campaign. This article describes a science fiction setting based on the stories and personalities of Celtic myth that gamemasters can use for just such a campaign.

The New Book of Invasion

The history of the Celtic Alliance begins on Earth. Centuries ago, a philosophical movement developed in Europe around the works of several major artists, social scientists and thinkers. This neo-Celtic movement, as it became known, was founded on a deep respect for the traditions and mythology of the ancient Celts. The neo-Celts attempted to preserve, and in some respects re-create, all of the many aspects of ancient Celtic life and to integrate those ideals with the tools and techniques of modern life.

After many years of trouble on Earth, the majority of the neo-Celtic movement decided to depart their home world and seek to establish a colony of their own where their way of life could be developed free of the cultural conflict that plagued them. A great "sleeper ship" was outfitted for the journey with almost all the colonists had, entrusting their entire future to their chances at establishing a successful colony.

The trip to their colony did no go as the colonists planned. A navigational accident caused the ship to be thrown off course while the colonists were in cold sleep. Miraculously, the change in the ship's course sent the colonists to a star system that offered them opportunities beyond their wildest dreams. Many of the Celts credit their incredible good fortune to the will of the gods, the luck of the Irish or, later, to the possible intervention of the Shidhe.

The neo-Celtic colonists landed on the third planet of the star system they named Danu after the great mother goddess of Celtic myth. They found the planet inhabited by a race of humanoids that appeared virtually identical to humans, whom the Celts came to call the Firbolg. They established peaceful relations with the primitive Firbolg and began to colonize the four inhabitable planets of the Danu system, which they named after the Four Great Cities of Celtic legend: Gorias, Findias, Murias, Falias. The colonists called themselves the Tuatha de Dannan, the "Children of Danu," and began to settle in to their new home.

Several generations after the settlement of the Four Worlds, the Tuatha encountered the Shidhe for the first time. Sightings and legends of the strange luminescent beings had been reported since the first colonization of the Danu system. The Firbolg considered the "shining ones" to be gods that their tribes worshipped, but their existence was not established until a company of the Shidhe appeared in the Great Hall of Tara during the crowning of High King Finn MacDoughal to speak a prophecy that Finn's line would lead the Tuatha to greatness and would face great trials in the generations ahead. Since that time, the Tuatha have attempted to communicate with the Shidhe through both technology and magic but have only achieved brief and inconclusive contact.

More than one hundred and fifty years after the colonization of the Danu system, the Celtic Alliance faced their first great threat. A race of alien humanoids that the Celts call the Fomori sent an invasion fleet to the Four Worlds to claim them for their growing Empire. The Tuatha fought to repel the invasion, despite being outnumbered by the Fomori fleet. The warrior queen Macha MacDoughal led the forces of the Tuatha to victory, driving the Fomori fleet back beyond the asteroid belt known as Danu's Wall. The Fomori have been enemies of the Tuatha since that day and continue to wait for the time when they will be able to invade again and take the prize jewel that is Danu for their own.

Last year, in the beginning of the reign of the High King Conal MacDoughal, the latest of Finn's line, the Celtic Alliance has been contacted by an exploration ship from the Terran Federation, an alliance of colony worlds centered around Earth, the first contact with Earth in nearly two hundred years. The Celts are considering the possibility of an alliance with their Earth cousins, but many still harbor ill feelings based on the history of the Celts leaving Earth behind. Fomori spies and saboteurs attempt to prevent the alliance at all costs while the mysterious Shidhe remain silent.

The Danu System

The star Danu is a G-type yellow star, similar to Earth's sun, located some 2,000 light years away from Earth. The system has a total of six planets, four of which are capable of sustaining life.

The innermost planet, Brigid, is an airless world with surface temperatures hot enough to melt metal. The outermost planet is Annwn, a small frozen world named for the land of the dead. Annwn has a thin atmosphere that has toxic levels of chlorine and other gases and its surface is covered in frozen gas. The planet is uninhabited, although it has become the location for Fomori spy missions and hidden pirate bases in the past. Tuatha ships regularly patrol Annwn to check for any possible incursions into the Danu system.

The inner five planets are separated from Annwn by an asteroid belt that is known as Danu's Wall. Tuatha scholars speculate that the asteroid belt is the remains of a seventh planet in the Danu system that was destroyed millennia ago, possibly due to the actions of the Shidhe. Some of the larger asteroids in the belt are mined for minerals and contain small colonies of miners. The miners are something of an odd lot, superstitious even for the Tuatha. They believe that there are Shidhe that appear from time to time in the mines and among the asteroids, sometimes playing dangerous games with the miners and even leading them astray.

The asteroid belt is ringed with small asteroids that have been hollowed out and made into floating military platforms for the defense of the Danu system against incursion, especially by the forces of the Fomori. These early-warning stations are manned by Celt warriors and armed with massive particle cannons and force screens for defense.

The Four Worlds

The inner four planets of the Danu system are all capable of supporting life, some of them through the terraforming efforts of the early Tuatha settlers and, some suspect, because of the intervention of the Shidhe at some distant point in the past. The four worlds are named for the four great cities of Celtic myth: Gorias, Findias, Murias and Falias.

Gorias

Gorias, also known as the "Land of Fire," is a world of jungles and hostile deserts. It's close proximity to Danu and its minimal axial tilt makes Gorias a very warm planet. The northern and southern hemispheres are tropical and daytime temperatures at the equator can rise over 40 degrees Celsius.

The jungle portions of Gorias' continents provide a wealth of plant and animal species, as well as herbal materials and unique biochemicals. Some sub-tropical regions nearer to the poles have been cleared for farming. The planet's deserts are harsh and inhospitable and have been left to themselves. There have been scattered reports of sightings in the equatorial deserts that might be Shidhe activity. The High King is considering the possibility of sending expeditions into the desert to study this possibility, but thus far it hasn't been a significant enough occurrence to rate such study.

Findias

Called the "Crown of Danu," Findias is considered by most to be the most beautiful world in the system. It is also the most Earth-like of the Four Worlds. Findias has five major continents, Ulster, Connaught, Munster, Leinster and Meath, all with Tuatha settlements of one sort or another. The largest northern continent, Meath, is the home of the city of Tara, the seat of the High King of the Tuatha.

Findias the home of the native humanoids of the Danu system that the Tuatha call the Firbolg. The Firbolg inhabit Ulster and Meath, with only a few scattered tribes on the other continents.

Murias

Murias "the Cauldron," is a largely water-covered planet, with numerous small island-like continents, none larger than the British Isles on Earth. The great mystery of Murias is that it appears to have at one time supported some kind of civilization. There are ruins of small cities and structures scattered over the planet's land masses and several that have been discovered sunken miles offshore. Most of the ruins are stone constructions with little or no indication of any advanced technology. The stone structures could have been built by a culture as early as Bronze Age in development. The fact that some of the ruins are under water suggests that Murias may have suffered a major climactic change that caused a rising of the planet's sea level, but there is no real indication of what, if anything, caused the ruins on the planet to become uninhabited. The planet's complex systems of seven small moons and the strange tidal effects caused by them may also have been responsible.

More mysterious than the ruins is the island that the Tuatha have named Tir Bo Thuinn, "The Land Beyond the Wave," off the coast of one of the larger land masses. The island appears to contain an example of an ancient city, like the ruins found elsewhere, but perfectly preserved. Unfortunately, Tuatha scientists have not been able to examine the ruins on Tir Bo Thuinn because the island is surrounded by some unknown kind of barrier, known as the Veil. This invisible wall harmlessly blocks the passage of any person, vehicle or probe that attempts to approach the island.

It is suspected that the ruins on Murias may be the remnants of an ancient Shidhe culture, or perhaps those of another race the Shidhe transplanted to Murias like the Firbolg. Some even speculate that Murias might be the Firbolg home world and that the Firbolg somehow migrated to Findias during a deluge that sank most of the great land masses, perhaps with the aid of the Shidhe.

Falias

Cold and wintry for most of its year, Falias is a rocky and inhospitable world that the Tuatha have nonetheless made into a thriving colony, based primarily on the world's rich mineral and geothermal resources. The people of Falias are a

hardy breed and consider the other Tuatha to be somewhat "thin-blooded" for not being raised to deal with the harsh winters that they are accustomed to.

The wilderness of the Falian mountains and rocky plains are inhabited by a variety of animal life adapted to the cold and harsh environment. Rock bears, Falian wolves and great furred cats live there as well as hardy mountain goats and sheep introduced by the colonists.

The Tuatha De Dannan

The society of the Tuatha de Dannan is modeled on the ideals and cultural heritage of the ancient Celts, with some concessions to modern thought permitted by the Tuatha's founders. Generally speaking, the neo-Celts are a proud and honorable people who value personal honor, bravery, beauty, cleverness and wisdom. They are pioneers and explorers by nature, which is why they chose the lives of colonists rather than living in relative comfort on Earth.

Largely speaking, the Tuatha are also romantics. They recognize the importance of science and reason and make good use of their technological prowess. At the same time, they also acknowledge the mysterious nature of the universe and make use of psychic training, intuitive thought, inspiration and ancient magic. To the Tuatha, the universe is still a place of wonder and magic, where anything can happen and nothing is really impossible. This makes them a rather credulous people, who are not easily surprised. This is one of the reasons that the Tuatha accepted contact with the Shidhe so easily.

Gesas

An important neo-Celtic tradition is observing the custom of gesas. A gesa is a personal or cultural taboo or restriction. Sometimes it is also a part of a person's fate or destiny. Gesas can have positive and negative aspects and important people have correspondingly more important gesas. For the most part, gesas play a ceremonial role for the Tuatha. They are the oaths and other taboos observed by members of the druidic and warrior orders as well as royalty. Many Tuatha believe that gesas regarding destiny do tend to come true. Whether this is merely a myth or the result of the Celt's Second Sight or even the intervention of beings such as the Shidhe is unknown, but a great many Tuatha do end up fulfilling the gesas concerning them in one way or another.

The High King

The ruler of the Tuatha is the Ard Righ, the High King. Each of the Four Worlds is ruled by a King (Righ), one of whom also holds the title of High King. The position of High King is hereditary, but it is also an elected office. The royal families of the Tuatha choose to elevate a family to the position of High King and can decide to remove that privilege and grant it to another family if they are in unanimous agreement. The MacDoughal line presently rules the Tuatha de Dannan and Findias from the Throne City of Tara.

Druids and Bards

As the primary practitioners of magic, Druids hold a place of high esteem in Tuatha society. They are keepers of lore and wisdom, scientists, magicians, judges, scholars and religious leaders. The training to become a druid is arduous, taking twenty years to reach the rank of Master and become a true druid. Their training includes study of law, history, science, astronomy and magic. Both male and female Tuatha can become druids.

The Grand Druidic Order comprises representatives from all of the Druid Orders in the Danu system. Each world has several Orders of its own. In general, the Orders generally cooperate with a minimum of politics. Each Order is controlled by a Grand Master and the Arch-Druid of the Grand Order is elected from among them. The Arch-Druid resides part of the year at the Grand College on Ynys Mon, the sacred island on Murias and the remainder in the throne city of Tara.

Closely related to the Druids are the bardic colleges. Bards are given special status in Tuatha society, which respects

and encourages its artists. They train intensively to perfect their art and are to a degree supported by Tuatha society, which offers a Bard common necessities in exchange for sharing their art with the world. The tests to attend a Bardic College are fiercely competitive and the journey from apprentice to Master Bard is a long one, usually taking nine years. Every three years, the High King appoints a Master Bard as the royal Bard, a sort of poet laureate whose role is to record the history of the Tuatha in art so that it will not be forgotten.

The Fianna

The Tuatha military is known as the Fianna. They are warriors of the first order, who upon joining the military break all of their clan and family ties and swear allegiance only to the Celtic Alliance. They promise to defend the Four Worlds and the Danu system with their lives if need be. The training to become a member of the Fianna is very through, and includes appreciation for the arts and culture of the Tuatha in addition to combat training. Both men and women are able to join the Fianna provided they pass the necessary physical and educational tests.

The Fianna maintain a fleet of starships that protect the system. They also man military installations on the Four Worlds and in the asteroids of Danu's Wall. They are also the ceremonial guards at all royal functions and protect the Kings of the Tuatha. The order is lead by a Commander-General who has officers beneath him who oversee the various branches of the order. The Red Brach is ground forces and domestic peace-keepers, the Silver Branch is space forces and the Golden Branch are royal guardians.

The Firbolg

The Firbolg are the native inhabitants of Findias in the Danu system. They are a startling example of parallel evolution, Shidhe intervention or perhaps Fomori experimentation, depending on which theory you believe. The Firbolg are genetically human in virtually every respect. There are some minor genetic variations that are being closely studied by Tuatha scientists, but for the most part, they are human. They are capable of interbreeding with the Tuatha and since the colonization there have been a number of Firbolg/Tuatha interminglings.

The Firbolg were a primitive people when the Tuatha arrived at Findias, living at an Iron Age level with spears and early agriculture (around Tech Level 2). Because their name for themselves translated as "People of the Spear," the Tuatha took that as an omen and began calling them Firbolg (which means much the same in ancient Celtic). The planetary population of Firbolg was not large, perhaps 250,000 spread across the two most fertile continents of Findias.

When the Tuatha first arrived, they were greeted openly by the Firbolg, who believed the strange travelers to be emissaries from the Shidhe, who the Firbolg worship. When the Tuatha decided to colonize Findias, there were some conflicts with the Firbolg over land, most of which were settled with superior Tuatha technology.

Presently, the Firbolg live in peace with their Tuatha neighbors. Most of their communities still live as their ancestors did, but many are breaking away from the old traditions and living in Tuatha cities and attending their educational programs and even adopting their customs. This is a serious point of contention for Firbolg traditionalists. There is even a radical fringe movement to expel the Tuatha from Findias and reclaim the planet as an independent Firbolg home world, but it is small and largely powerless at present against the technological superiority of the Tuatha.

The Firbolg are characterized by traits of curiosity, honesty and a strong belief in the supernatural. They tend to take things a great deal on faith and are considered to be somewhat gullible by the Tuatha (and perhaps, by the Shidhe). They are a passionate people, with a strong stubborn streak where their beliefs and traditions are concerned.

The Firbolg are a peaceful people despite their warlike name. They live in a primarily agrarian society and hunt and raise domestic animals for food. Conflict between the tribes of Firbolg was rare because they were so spread out over the vast expanse of territory on Findias, but occasional skirmishes have been known.

The central element of Firbolg culture is their religion. They believe that the Shidhe, known to them as "the Shining Ones," are gods who dwell in an Otherworldly paradise. Firbolg shamans use trance, meditation, ESP and astral

projection to gain visions from the Otherworld to guide their people along the correct path. Occasional appearances by the Shidhe over the years seems to have reinforced the Firbolg faith (intentionally or otherwise).

The Tuatha tend to treat the Firbolg as "country cousins," primitives that are in need of their guidance and support. There are many Tuatha who respect Firbolg culture and artistic achievements, but very few who consider the colonization of Findias wrong. A small number of Tuatha have suggested providing a greater measure of independence for the Firbolg. So far, no Tuatha has advocated abandoning Findias entirely to the Firbolg, at least, not in public.

Fomori

The Fomori are a race of humanoids that hail from a world only a scant dozen light years from the Danu system. Fomor is a planet in orbit of a red supergiant star known as Balor's Eye to the Fomori. Centuries ago the Fomori possessed manned space-flight and even traveled to the Danu system. It is speculated that some of the peculiarities of the system that the Tuatha have discovered may be the result of ancient Fomori terraforming and genetic engineering.

About three hundred years ago, the Fomori civilization collapsed in a terrible civil war. Millions died as both sides unleashed terrible nuclear, chemical and biological weapons upon each other and the ecosystem of their home world was ravaged. When the dust cleared, both sides had nearly annihilated each other and were forced to set aside their differences for the survival of their species.

For generations, the Fomori struggled to rebuild all they had lost. The mutagenic weapons used during the war took their toll and later generations of Fomori were born with terrible mutations and genetic defects. The once-beautiful race became twisted and hideous and turned to their advanced medicine and skill in cybernetics to allow them to survive and continue to propagate. Survival of the race became the utmost priority and a ruthlessly militaristic and ordered society evolved from the chaos following the Great Conflict.

Eventually, the Fomori regained their spaceflight capabilities. By this time they had become a race of ruthlessly survival-driven cyborgs, twisted and mutated by the toxic environment of their home world, but adapted to survive and overcome the harsh conditions they lived under. The Fomori sent scout ships and probes to explore the surrounding systems and discovered the presence of the Tuatha in the Danu system.

After their first invasion attempt was repulsed, the Fomori attempted to open diplomatic relations with the Tuatha. At present, relations between the two civilizations are in a shaky state of peace as the Fomori use diplomatic measures to buy them time for new invasion plans and the Tuatha work to discover the Fomori's plans.

All of the Fomori are twisted and unpleasant to look at (especially to the Tuatha, with their cultural obsession with physical blemishes). The most severe physical deformities have been corrected with cybernetic replacements, but the overall results have no place for esthetics. Most Fomori will have one or more cybernetic parts, but these replacements generally only replace the function of malformed body parts.

The warrior class of the Fomori has extensive cybernetic replacements. They usually include bionic limbs with increased strength, sensory enhancements and weapon implants. Their skin is usually armor plated, making them dangerous opponents.

Some Fomori have the Talent and learn the skills to use it. These individuals are usually the most devious and dangerous of their kind because they have learned great subtlety in the exercise of their mental abilities. Rumors among the Tuatha abound that the ruler of the Fomori is their most powerful and Talented mind, a hideous creature that is little more than a brain hooked up to a vast array of life support mechanisms and psionic boosters that give its powers tremendous reach, perhaps even to the edges of the Danu system itself . . .

The Fomori are a race obsessed with their own survival. They have sublimated all individual desires and goals into this master plan. Individual Fomori are generally cruel and ruthless, unpleasant to those weaker to them and deferent to those with greater power. They do not value art, music or culture, having virtually none of their own.

The ecosystem of Fomor was devastated by war centuries ago. Most of the world is a blasted wasteland and the Fomori live in self-contained cities or orbital habitats. Fomori life would be considered stark and sterile by most standards, surrounded by life-sustaining machines and technologies.

The Shidhe

The beings that the Tuatha call the Shidhe are a mystery to the inhabitants of the Danu system. So far as anyone can tell, the Shidhe are alien energy beings that inhabit the void of Otherspace, shaping the energy there to their will. They are capable of virtually godlike feats of teleportation, shape-shifting and energy projection. The Shidhe also appear to exist outside of the normal space-time continuum, allowing them to experience the past, present and future simultaneously in a way unknowable to humans. They are quite intelligent, but rather inscrutable as to their motives and their plans, if any, for interacting with the human inhabitants of the system. They are capricious at times and play games of illusion and deception with the unwary. For the most part they remain in their extra-dimensional domain and don't bother anyone.

Interestingly enough, the Shidhe seem to have taken that name from Earth mythology as their own and they are amazingly like ancient Celtic tales of the Fair Folk. Tuatha scholars have developed two conflicting theories on why this is so. One says that the Shidhe have no real form or imagination as humans understand it and they simply choose to appear in forms that the Tuatha can understand, drawn from their own mythology and that the real nature of the Shidhe is simply beyond human comprehension.

The more radical theory suggests that the Shidhe are some sort on ancient Precursor race that visited Earth in the distant past. Perhaps the travelers from the Four Cities were in fact Shidhe explorers who came to Earth and began the first Book of Invasion myth cycle about the Tuatha. If this is so, scholars speculate, then the Firbolg are themselves humans that were transplanted to Findias by the Shidhe for their own purposes. This would explain their amazing biological similarities to humans.

Unfortunately, whatever the truth may be, the Shidhe aren't telling. They seem content for the most part to watch and wait, although no one knows what it is they are waiting for.

Technology

The Tuatha have reached a high level of technological development. They are at which might be considered a "space opera" level of technology: with interstellar flight, force field technology, highly advanced computers and medicine as well as psionic techniques and technology. In ***GURPS*** terms, the Celtic Alliance and the Fomori are at Tech Level 11 (more or less).

Weapons and Armor

The most common personal weapons used by the Tuatha are the blaster and the force-sword. Tuatha blasters fire compressed particle beams and can range in power from a shock powerful enough to stun the nervous systems of most creatures to a blast able to punch through armor plate. The force-sword uses force fields to create an energy blade about a meter in length that can cut through most materials and armor. Force-swords and other hand weapons are used on board starships and space stations due to the danger of damage or even decompression from a mis-fired blaster bolt.

Tuatha combat armor is made from a bio-plastic developed from plant materials from Gorias that has a high degree of energy absorption and dispersal capability. The bio-plastic can be sculpted into a suit of plate-like armor with flexible

joints. Tuatha armor is elaborately decorated with patterns and knot designs, many of which can be changed by the user of the armor to suit different occasions. Force shields (small, disc-shaped force fields) are often carried in combat as well.

Medicine

With their cultural taboo about physical perfection, the Tuatha have developed an impressive body of medical knowledge. They shun the idea of bionic or artificial implants unless they are unavoidable. Severe injuries are usually treated with regenerative compounds and the use of clone organ replacements whenever possible. For the few individuals for whom bionic replacements are required, there is a cultural bias against attempting to conceal the nature of the replacement. Although most would think that the Tuatha would prefer to conceal a bionic limb (for example) beneath a layer of plastiflesh, those Tuatha who must have bionic replacements do not conceal their disfigurement. To do so would be a shameful attempt to conceal the truth. There is a growing movement by many of the Tuatha to overcome the old taboos against bionics, but things have been slow to change.

Space Travel

The Tuatha have interstellar flight capability via access to Otherspace, another "layer" of the space-time continuum where ordinary space is distorted and the speed of light is not a limiting factor. This should be considered a Hyperspace drive in ***GURPS Space*** terms.

Otherspace is a realm of primal chaotic energy inhabited by the Shidhe (see below) who do not appear to object to travel through "their" realm. With Otherspace travel, Tuatha and Fomori ships can reach travel speeds of up to one light year per day. A journey from the Danu system to Earth would take a little less than five and a half years at this speed.

With their knowledge of transmissions through Otherspace and sophisticated computer technology, the Tuatha have created a vast, virtually instantaneous information network that spans the entire Danu star-system. Some question has arisen about the possibility of Otherspace transmissions being monitored or altered by the Shidhe if they are themselves inhabitants of Otherspace, but none has happened to anyone's knowledge.

Magic

The Tuatha have made a science of developing their latent psychic abilities. The development and training of these abilities makes use of many of the ancient magical traditions of the druids, including meditation and a complex system of mythological symbols that allow the mind to focus properly. The training allows psychically gifted individuals to invoke their abilities to perform feats of telepathy, ESP and psychokinesis. In ***GURPS*** terms all of the "magic" used by the Tuatha is actually psionic ability brought out and developed through druidic rituals and mental training.

"The Talent," as it is known among the Tuatha, is still fairly rare. Perhaps one person in ten has a touch of the Second Sight while only one in fifty has any real measure of talent. Most such individuals end up joining one of the Druidic orders to receive training in the use of their abilities.

The Talent is more common among the Firbolg, possibly due to Shidhe tinkering (see below). Gifted Firbolg often become shamans of their people. In fact, much of the peaceful cultural contact between the Tuatha and the Firbolg has been from the Druids and the Firbolg shamans exchanging knowledge and techniques over the years.

Ghosts

Both the Tuatha and the Firbolg recognize the existence of ghosts. The Firbolg believe them to be spirits of the restless dead, returned to haunt the living. The Tuatha consider ghosts to be more of a psychic phenomenon, though no less real. They believe that certain people with the Talent (even latently) can create a powerful "psychic echo" when they die an especially violent or emotional death. This psychic force takes on a form like the person who originated it

and can sometimes exercise psychic powers on the real world. Most ghosts are harmless specters who appear to warn or threaten, dealing with some task the person left undone. A rare few ghosts are dangerous poltergeists, but even these can be banished by adepts with the right psychic skills.

Occasionally, a powerful psychic impression will be left on an object belonging to the deceased. This object is usually something the deceased had in their possession when they died. Such an object can take on the personality and will of its owner and may even gain other unusual abilities from the psychic energy fused into it (see Willful Weapons, below).

Characters

Gamemasters should base Tuatha, Firbolg and Fomori characters in a ***Celtic Space*** campaign on at least 150 points to reflect their abilities. This makes for a fairly "realistic" campaign and characters. Larger point totals (from 200 to 500 points) can be used by gamemasters looking for higher-powered "space opera" campaigns with lots of cybernetics and psionic powers.

Tuatha

The Tuatha de Dannan, despite their somewhat vainglorious name, are as human as their Earth ancestors, if more sophisticated in their use of technology and magic. Generations of advanced medicine and challenging life have made the Tuatha a strong and capable race. With their advanced medical technology and their cultural taboo about physical perfection, the Tuatha have virtually eliminated any sort of physical birth defects among them. The gamemaster should discourage characters from having physical disadvantages that wouldn't exist in Tuatha society, like crippled limbs or blindness, without a very good explanation.

Firbolg

The Firbolg are genetically human for all intents and purposes and have the same abilities as the Tuatha. Most Firbolg are Primitive (TL2, -45 points) and have a slight Social Stigma associated with them (second-class citizen, -5 points). Many Firbolg have been educated by the Tuatha and do not have the Primitive disadvantage, but their Social Stigma still lingers.

Fomori

All of the Fomori are Ugly at least, some Hideous with their various deformities (-10 or -20 points). Most of their cybernetics only replace the function of malformed body parts and cost no points.

Fomori warriors will usually have the following bionics: Claws (15 points), Weapon Implant (blaster, 5 points), Bionic Reconstruction (25 points), Full Metal Jacket (PD 2, DR 6, 60 points) and Bionic Eyes with Light Intensification, Infravision and Polarization (30 points). Additional enhancements depend on the Fomor's rank and duties.

Fomori with the Talent will be well-trained in the use of their psionic abilities, especially telepathy and psychic vampirism. Most Fomori spies and saboteurs will be telepaths using their abilities to gather information and move undetected in the Alliance.

Terrans

Earth humans have only recently discovered the Celtic Alliance and opened some sort of diplomatic relations. Player characters could be crew members from the first ship from the Terran Federation (or other Earth culture from the gamemaster campaign) to discover the Danu system or they might be part of a diplomatic envoy dispatched from Earth to secure relations with the Celts. Earth humans are probably in for considerable culture shock in dealing with the Celts and their own ways of doing things.

It is possible that Celtic technology is even superior to that of Earth. The Tuatha development of magic (psi) abilities may prove surprising if nothing else, and may be something that emissaries from Earth would like to gain the secret of.

The Shidhe

Given their great power and inhuman nature, the Shidhe aren't recommended as player characters. They are far more of a plot device that the gamemaster can use to keep plots going in the right direction. Their mysterious motives and occasional tampering with mortal affairs can help to drive a Celtic campaign. For game purposes, the Shidhe are almost godlike beings and should be capable of whatever feats are required of them to move events along.

Gesas

It is up to individual gamemasters to decide if the Celtic belief in gesas has any basis in fact. If gesas are real, then they should be taken as appropriate Advantages or Disadvantages as described in ***GURPS Celtic Myth*** (p.86-89). If they are nothing more than a part of Celtic culture and custom, then they should be considered Quirks, or possibly Delusions for a gesa that is likely to get the character into a lot of trouble (like the belief that you can become invulnerable by fighting stark naked and painted blue, for example).

Advantages

The Talent 23 points/level

You have the potential to learn the mystic arts to perform amazing mental feats. Most people with the Talent are trained as druids or bards, or become shamans of their tribe if they are Firbolg.

In ***GURPS*** terms this advantages includes one level of each of the psionic powers from ***GURPS Psionics*** except for Electrokinesis and Teleport, which are unknown among the Tuatha and the Firbolg. Characters may purchase additional levels of the Talent or of individual abilities. It is quite common for someone with the Talent to be stronger in some areas than others, but those who have talent at all usually have at least a little of everything, the exception being the Second Sight (below).

Power levels greater than 15 in any aspect of the Talent are virtually unheard of, and overall Power levels of 8 or more are incredibly rare. The gamemaster is recommended to limit levels in this advantage. Practitioners of the mystic arts tend to be subtle rather than powerhouses.

Second Sight 15 points

You have the ability to sense immediate danger and see the future in a limited way. You can make an IQ roll to sense if there is any immediate danger present and (at the gamemaster's whim) you may receive visions of future events or sense the presence of destiny around some person or event.

This advantage is the same as the Danger Sense advantage. It means that the character has a touch of the Talent. Effectively, the character is a psi with ESP Power 5 and no training, gaining precognitive flashes at random in stressful situations. The Second Sight is common enough among the Tuatha and the Firbolg that there is no Unusual Background cost.

Spearman's Shield 40 points

You must have the Second Sight to have this advantage. As proof of the power of Celtic magic you can fight naked as warriors of legend and resist the attacks of many weapons as if you were wearing armor! Before a battle, your must remove your clothing (meaning this advantage isn't much use for fights in hostile environments where life support is

required). When the battle begins, you spend a point of Fatigue and make an IQ roll. If it is successful, you gain PD 1 and DR 10 against all physical attacks. This does not protect against energy weapons. You must make another IQ roll every two seconds to maintain your protection. If you fail a roll, you may spend a point of Fatigue and make another IQ roll at -2 to re-establish your protection on your next turn. In either case, Spearman's Shield costs a point of fatigue each minute it is in use.

This advantage is in fact an unconscious and untrained Psychokinetic ability. You in fact have the PK Shield skill at IQ and Psychokinesis Power 20 (for PK Shield only) with the following modifiers: Extra Duration (+30%), Instantaneous (+20%), Only while naked in battle (-40%) and Unconscious Only (-20%). Tuatha scholars speculate that this unconscious psychic ability may have been the source of legends of Spearman's Invulnerability in the ancient past (see ***GURPS Celtic Myth,*** p.80).

Disadvantages

Code of Honor (Celtic) -10 points

The Celtic code of honor as described in ***GURPS Celtic Myth*** (p.53) is common in the Celtic Alliance, especially among warriors. It consists of offering hospitality to those who need it, being as honest as possible and seeking vengeance for wrongs against yourself and your clan.

Social Stigma (scarred) -10 points

The Tuatha have a cultural dislike of physical deformity and imperfection. Anyone with obvious scars, deformities or bionic replacements is reacted to at -2, regardless of Appearance. Good Reputation, Charisma and manners can overcome this disadvantage with many Celts and their advanced medicine allows for the correction of most physical flaws.

Skills

Most of the new skills described in Celtic Myth exist in the Celtic Alliance, especially skills based around druidic or bardic lore. All of the psionic skills from ***GURPS Psionics*** are available to characters with the Talent except for Electrokinesis and Teleport skills as well as the Mindswitch skill. Psychics in the Alliance and among the Firbolg generally tend to be more skilled than powerful and are forced to rely on subtlety and skill rather than brute force.

Willful Weapons

Although a rare phenomenon, Willful Weapons (as described in ***Celtic Myth*** and *Pyramid #14*) do exist in ***Celtic Space***. They are generally the result of psychic wielders impressing their personalities into inanimate objects upon their deaths. Most willful weapons in ***Celtic Space*** will have gesas based on the manner of their original owner's death, such as seeking vengeance against the killer or his clan or race. Such items are often considered cursed by the Tuatha, but may be preserved as heirlooms or treasures if their abilities are valuable and their gesas not too obvious. Some willful weapons remain undetected as such for many years.

The Danu System

Gamemasters with access to ***GURPS Space*** can use the following as a reference for the Danu system:

Star Name: Danu
Type: G2III
Biozone: 3.1-4.7 AUs
Inner Limit: 0.1

Number of Planets: 6

PLANET	Orbit	Distance	Type	Gravity	Atmosphere	Moons
Brigid	1	0.6	Rockball	0.80	None	None
Gorias	2	3.1	Earthlike	1.02	Oxygen-Nitrogen	2 small moons
Findias	3	3.7	Earthlike	0.98	Oxygen-Nitrogen	1 medium moon
Murias	4	4.0	Earthlike	1.00	Oxygen-Nitrogen	7 small moons, faint ring
Falias	5	4.6	Earthlike	1.04	Oxygen-Nitrogen	1 large moon
Danu's Wall	6	5.2	Asteroid Belt	-	-	-
Annwn	7	7.4	Rock/ice ball	0.75	Trace	None

Adventures

Gamemasters can use the Celtic Alliance as the basis for a ***Celtic Space*** campaign or as an expansion to an existing ***Space*** campaign. The player characters could be Tuatha from the Four Worlds, part of the Firbolg tribes or explorers from Earth who have just discovered the Danu system (or even a combination of all three!). Adventure include contacting the Shidhe, fighting the Fomorians, traveling through the asteroid belt, keeping the peace with the Firbolg and exploring some of the unknown areas of the Four Worlds and the Danu system.

First Contact

An exploration ship from Earth (or an Earth-Federation/Empire) discovers the Danu system and is greeted by a Celtic Silver Branch starship in space. Both sides are initially curious and cautious, with the Celts still recalling the prejudice that caused their ancestors to choose to leave the home world behind. The Earth explorers should be amazed to find a thriving human civilization in an unknown sector of space. So begins the slow process of welcoming the new visitors to the Danu system and the beginnings of diplomatic relations between the Celtic Alliance and their Earth cousins. The new contact will have a number of challenges on both sides: cultural and historical differences to overcome as well as possible interference from the Fomori or even the Shidhe. Would a peaceful Earth Federation find the treatment of the Firbolg reason enough to deny membership to the Celts? Would the Alliance even want to join a larger Earth-centered political body? The player characters may be able to decide the political fates of both nations.

Exploration

Even in two centuries, the Tuatha have not explored all of the Danu system and many areas of the Four Worlds as well as Bridgit, Annwn and Danu's Wall remain unexplored territory. The players could take the roles of Celtic explorers who are charting and learning more about these unexplored regions: like the harsh deserts of Gorias, the undersea ruins of Murias, the craggy mountain passes of Falias and the harsh surfaces of Annwn and Bridgit. Characters might discover new resources, ancient ruins, lost (Shidhe?) technology or evidence of a hidden pirate base or a Fomori incursion into the Alliance.

Land Beyond the Wave

A somewhat eccentric but respected druid on Murias believes she has discovered a psychic means of opening a passage in the Veil that surrounds Tir Bo Thuinn. She wants the player characters to accompany her in exploring the ruins and bringing back their findings to the King of Murias and eventually to the High King himself.

The druid's technique actually works, and the characters become the first Celts to set foot of the Land Beyond the Wave. They discover that the ruins are perfectly preserved by the effects of the Veil and that the outside world seems strangely distorted from inside the barrier. The ruins are a repository of some advanced technology, possibly left behind by the Shidhe or some other precursor race. The technology is very dangerous for humans and other "less evolved" creatures because it is highly psycho-reactive, responding to thought impulses and random ideas that humans have not yet learned to entirely control.

The characters find that many of their hidden dreams and fears are coming to life on the island, as the alien technology

materializes whatever the characters think of. They must learn to control their thoughts or their own fears will destroy them. They will also have to decide if they can allow the technology on the island to be salvaged, especially when it turns out that the druid's apprentice has been replaced by a telepathic Fomori spy who plans to use this technology to make his people invincible.

Firbolg Rebellion

A shaman among the Firbolg has begun agitating for a Tuatha withdrawal from Findias and inciting violence against the Tuatha by the Firbolg. Efforts to arrest him have failed and he appears to have considerable skill with magic, using it and traditional guerrilla tactics to evade the Red Branch's efforts to capture him.

The player characters are assigned to infiltrate the Firbolg communities of Meath and try and learn more about the rebel leader and his plans. Along the way they get a first-hand look at how the Firbolg are treated (both good and bad) by the Tuatha and may develop some sympathy for their plight.

They manage to pass all of the initiation tests (some telepathic) in order to get into the Firbolg resistance and discover that the mysterious leader claims to draw his power and authority from the Shidhe! Is the rebel leader actually the chosen of the gods and, if so, why have the Shidhe decided to choose sides after more than two centuries. Or is the shaman actually a Fomori infiltrator in disguise, looking to stir up trouble and using advanced Fomori technology to disguise his efforts as the will of the Shining Ones?

The Four Treasures

The player characters discover a Fomori spy attempting to steal ancient texts from a Bardic college on Gorias. These documents involve tales of the legendary Four Treasures of the Tuatha de Dannan, that the Tuatha brought with them on their journey to Eiru (ancient Ireland). Evidence arises that suggests that the Four Treasures may have been actual items that the Shidhe brought with them to Earth millennia ago and took back to the stars with them. Legends say the treasures were the Spear of Gorias, the Sword of Findias, the Cauldron of Murias and the Stone of Falias (the Lia Fail). They may be lost remnants of Shidhe ultra-technology or powerful repositories of psychic energy.

The player characters must work against the Fomori infiltrations who are looking for the lost Treasures, which they believe are hidden on each of the Four Worlds in the Danu system. The treasures could be as powerful as the Fomor hope or they might only be effective as symbol to rally (or demoralize) the Celtic people. The gamemaster will have to decide the potential of the treasure and whether or not the Shidhe are likely to intervene in order to keep them hidden. The treasures are most likely concealed behind various traps and protections, perhaps even in small pockets of Otherspace.

Other Game Systems

Gamemasters can make use of the Celtic Alliance and their enemies the Fomori in other space-faring game systems in addition to ***GURPS***.

Traveller

The Celtic Alliance history could occur as described, with the long-lost colony being discovered by Imperium explorers or the like. The Tuatha and the Fomori could become involved in the politics and conflicts of the other stellar powers in the Traveler universe, making allies and enemies on either side. The Tuatha's use of psionics will likely draw some initial distrust from the Imperium but might make the Four Worlds a haven for psionics seeking training in their abilities. It might also attract the attention of the psionic Zhodani, who wish to ally with their psychic "brethren" against the Imperium.

Shatterzone

The Four Worlds make a good "lost colony" for the chaotic universe of Shatterzone. Their technology and psionic abilities fit in just fine with the abilities presented in the game. Perhaps the first outside ship to contact the Alliance comes from the Fleet, or one of the mega-corporations. Or perhaps it is an independent ship that must decide what it will do with the information about the Alliance. The Fomori might well be connected with whatever threat lurks on the other side of the Shatterzone and the Shidhe could also be connected with the strange phenomena in the depths of the River of God.

Star Hero

HERO Games universal system adapts well for the setting of ***Celtic Space.*** Gamemasters can use the Celtic Alliance as an addition to an existing Star Hero campaign, with the players as the first outsiders to make contact. Or they can star an entire ***Celtic Space*** campaign, with players taking the roles of Celtic and Firbolg characters working to explore and protect the Danu system.

Star Wars

The Four Worlds might exist in some distant sector of space untouched by the Empire (or perhaps recently liberated if the campaign takes place after the Battle of Endor). The Tuatha wouldn't be from Earth, they would just have some parallels to Earth legend (like the rest of the ***Star Wars*** universe). Most Tuatha technology is fully compatible with the equipment from ***Star Wars*** and their magic could be based on a use of the Force.

By Terry Pratchett and Phil Masters

Art by Paul Kidby

The Ice Giants

The gods of Cori Celesti have a traditional categorical enemy in the form of the Ice Giants, who probably started out as some kind of artistically symbolic description of glaciers. Now, however, the metaphor has got right out of hand, and is confidently expected to destroy the world one day. They have and need no worshippers; the gods have warned humanity of this dreadful doom so often that people believe in them much more than they believe in any god. (The divine grasp of human psychology is amazingly sloppy at times.)

The Ice Giants are held prisoner within a wall of mountains near the Hub, and patiently await the day of the Apocralypse, when they will emerge riding glaciers and crush all before them. They are given to explaining that their triumph is a matter of "historical inevitability," if anyone asks. Their feud with the gods is ancient, and deeper than the mere fact that they would destroy all the gods' worshippers can explain. There are mutters that it all began when one side failed to return a lawnmower borrowed from the other.

Personally, Ice Giants are the size of houses, craggy and glinting like ice, with coal-black eyes set deep in their sockets. Think about them next time you build a snowman.

Hermits

Many Disc religions revere hermits as wise thinkers who retreat from worldly temptation and get on with some serious worship in secluded locations. The fact that this also gets a lot of rather dotty and dangerously original religious thinkers out from under the feet of the temple hierarchy, and away from most people who might ask them too many questions, may or may not occur to the priesthood.

The really dangerous truth, however, is that hermits have a bizarre relationship with established religion, and a perilously close relationship with too many of the *wrong* gods. The wildernesses into which they withdraw are full of Small Gods and the odd Forgotten God, who latch onto strong religious imaginations like leeches. The hermits naturally perceive the offers they receive as temptations, and the would-be deities as demons or spirits, but that in itself is a form of belief, so it helps keep their tempters going. For that matter, some hermits find far more to enjoy in the visions they are offered than a conventional priest could approve.

A hermit may emerge from the wilderness with radical new ideas or beliefs that give a Small God a foothold in the wider community of worshippers, but mostly this is a low-level symbiosis; the hermit gives the Small Gods a little bit of belief, and the Small Gods give the hermit something to refuse and deny. And accusing a hermit of being mad because he hears voices and thinks strange religious ideas is missing the point; it's a very *functional* sort of madness.

The Games of the Gods

The gods play many games in Dunmanifestin; they need something to while away the time. Mostly, however, they play with mortals.

Such games can be played with dice, along with a map-board of the Disc, but no figures as such. There are figures on the table, but anyone examining them closely will recognise the Disc's inhabitants. The real ones.

Don't complain, even if you meet a god. From the divine point of view, this is what mortals are for. The loss (or gain) of worshippers involved is part of the game; gambling for real stakes is more interesting.

The two most formidable players are Fate and the Lady, who have been known to help each other out along the way just to make the end-game more interesting. This helps explain why so many Disc heroes have such weird careers.

Mortals caught up in such a game can sometimes tell by the unlikely events that happen around them; keen ears may also, sometimes, catch the sound of rolling dice. (Six-siders only -- the gods are not original enough to work with those complicated polyhedral things, although one day they may catch on to the eight-siders used in Disc fortune-telling and gambling.) However, some gods have developed a taste for diceless games, and Fate now often insists that games with the Lady are diceless, as he says he can't trust someone who always rolls where other people can't see, and who often fudges the results. Such games may be played at the strategic level ("Mighty Empires"), the single-character level ("Star-Crossed Lovers") or somewhere in between ("Mad Kings"). The Lady is prone to playing with individuals while everyone else is playing with armies, and winning.

Small God PCs

It is possible, with some caution, for a PC to be an actual deity. Not one of the big gods of Cori Celesti, but a lesser figure, with a handful of worshipers. It requires thousands, even millions, of committed believers before one can smite and cast down and generally play free with physical law; a small number of worshippers means a small, sensible points total.

A deity may be brand new, having acquired divinity as the result of some occurrence that believer-types chose to regard as miraculous. Or it may have a fading cult, reduced to a loyal few. A Small God who has taken physical form *may* not be able to return to intangibility (the "astral plane") without a particular level of belief, and can die *permanently* if its physical body is destroyed. Thus, a GM may opt to permit a Small God character to be a Being of Pure Thought (see p.CI34), or to take Resurrection (p.CI64), or may insist that they take the same risks as a mortal PC.

Handling such a low-level deity requires a high level of roleplaying. If other PCs are the "believers," they have to act the part. A new deity needs to assert power to increase the size of Its following, while being aware that It needs the believers more than they really need the religion. Remember that believers who lose their god (perhaps literally) may find It again, but a god who loses Its believers is more gone than the Apatosaurus.

Also, Small Gods are not naturally co-operative with each other. They are in direct, desperate competition for worshipers. More than one such character per party is *highly* implausible.

Advantages: GMs are fully entitled to require an Unusual Background for a Small God, of whatever level seems appropriate -- 20, 50, or 100 points if desired. Also, any deity, however minor, is a Recognised Divinity. Beyond that, almost anything goes; "Racial" or "Super" Advantages are entirely plausible, especially if they fit the god's chosen image and specialisation. (But try not to have Small Gods played as Discworld superheroes; they should be cautious about risking their necks, even if they have none or several, and are ultimately bosses, not field commanders.) Mind-reading, bought as psionic telepathy, is very common, sometimes with the Limitation, "Only on Own Worshippers" (value varies from -10% to -70% according to size of flock).

Disadvantages: Small Gods can have extreme and bizarre problems and Quirks. They can also have Involuntary Duties -- huge favours owed other Recognised Divinities. All have a special Dependency: "Being Worshipped."

Skills: Gods don't believe much in learning skills, but those who are patrons of professions may impress their worshippers more if they can speak convincingly on the subject, and they do have lots of time, and often the ability to learn from the minds of talented worshippers. Many enjoy various Board Games.

The Creator

The Creator of the Discworld takes the form, to human perceptions, of a weasel-faced little man with a pencil tucked behind one ear. His voice sounds made for complaining, and he sometimes seems vague and unsure of his words. He sees himself as a craftsman, who accepts commissions to create worlds whenever a new universe comes into being. (According to quantum mechanics, this is billions of times per second, so he keeps busy.) He admits that he is not the only Creator around, but he dismisses his competitors as lacking attention to detail or the personal touch. He can create anything, and adjust any physical law (he is proud of his skill) but he does not seem especially imaginative; he works from specifications and (doubtless Platonic) standard plans. He dislikes the bodging involved in miracles, but even the most careful craftsman occasionally has to install a temporary fix when proper materials are not to hand.

He is also prepared to return to old jobs to make sure that they are running correctly; he does not merely set up a few physical laws and assume that everything will run itself from then on. However, he does not actively intervene in mortal affairs; that would be more than his job is worth. His most radical behaviour is along the lines of creating one seven-sided snowflake in a blizzard, to see if anyone objects.

Gods and False Names

Because the main thing that a god needs is belief, and because names are just labels, some gods have blanked out a little bit of pride and adopted an obvious strategy -- they have gone looking for worshippers in different lands and even different fields of specialisation.

This has a few clear risks -- conflicts between one's different worshippers can be both unavoidable and embarrassing, jealous rivals may blow one's cover, there's a lot of extra running around involved, and frankly, some gods are dim enough to manifest in the wrong form (especially after a hard night's carousing), which can shock naive worshippers terribly. But the sheer power and security that this strategy offers is too much for some to ignore.

This sort of thing could make life complicated for priests dealing with different beliefs in foreign lands. Just as the hierarchy is getting a really good holy feud going, an embarrassed and oddly-worded revelation might suddenly arrive from Cori Celesti, telling them to make peace . . .

Temples

Temples are simply places where the gods can gather large groups of worshippers and really get some belief going. Most religions have very standardised architectural styles, as different-looking places of worship just confuse people and undermine faith. Thus, even in the largest cities, one may find Strict Druids worshipping in open-air stone circles alongside Ephebian shrines with columns and marble sculptures.

The Four Horsemen of the Apocralypse

Death is, *ex officio,* one of the "Four Horsemen of the Apocralypse." These four anthropomorphic personifications represent the forces that Discworlders understand will run riot come the end of the world. However, predictions of that event are many and varied and often contradictory, making it a debated, apocryphal sort of apocalypse -- an Apocralypse.

The other three horsemen are War, who appears as a big, bluff, jolly figure in red armour; Famine, who causes every bar he drinks in to run out of snacks; and Pestilence, whose breathy, wet voice sounds downright contagious. Apart from some generalised manifestation on appropriate scenes, the other three do not show up as much as Death, who, after all, appears in the most peaceable and sophisticated regions, and who always accompanies the other three. The Four Horsemen get on with each other comfortably, as fellow professionals.

Games Death Plays

By ancient convention, Death can be formally challenged to play some kind of game for any life for which he comes. Actually, he cannot be defeated, unless he so chooses; he is not above bending a rule for people whose motives he admires, but he does not make a habit of it. This could be doubly frustrating for a chess grandmaster who challenged him, because he keeps forgetting the names of the pieces, and then wins anyway.

In any case, the challenge must be balanced; only someone with special privileges can play for more life without offering a balancing stake. At the minimum, a challenge for the life of a human might risk the life of another human, who *must* willingly volunteer. Death is as aware of narrative causality as the next anthropomorphic personification, and may well look more favourably on someone who gambles their own life to save the life of another. But don't bet on it. If Death loses, he should still be given some nominal but meaningful alternative -- say, the life of a valuable domestic animal. He will play any game the challenger chooses that has a clear winner and loser -- chess, cards, obscure board games . . . RPGs are not acceptable, although it's a tempting thought.

by Loren Dean

Ever since the late 70s, Steve Jackson's ***Car Wars*** has been one of the ol' faithfuls of the gaming industry. Nearly everybody's played it, and nearly everybody whose played it has thoroughly enjoyed it. The game's a survivor, and even in today's card-glutted market, it's going strong.

One of the things that characterizes a group of gamers I know is their love of the third dimension. Whatever game was being played, they'd run out and buy every figure they could afford, so that big brawls and such looked really cool. Let's face it, there's nothing like pushing figures around a tabletop, and then getting down for a "figure's eye view" of the action, to make a scene come alive.

This group of gamers (of which I was a part, though I've since moved away), renewed their interest in Car Wars in exactly this fashion -- taking it to the third dimension. Sure, we loved ***Car Wars.*** For us, it's peculiar brand of large-caliber vehicular violence was unbeatable. However, we had to have that third dimension -- the little counters just didn't cut it anymore.

Accordingly, we seized on an idea, and quickly implemented it. We each bought a 1:24 scale model car, assembled it, and then went through our spare figure parts boxes for weapon-looking stuff to tack onto them. Super-Scale ***Car Wars*** (for us at least) was born.

If the notion of playing ***Car Wars*** in 1:24 scale appeals to you, great. I've written this article with you in mind, and will explain as best I can how to get started. We'll jump right in.

The Car

The first thing you're going to want is some model cars (well, the *first* thing you'll need is a copy of the rules, but I'm skipping that step). Even if there isn't a very big game shop in your town, there's bound to be someplace that deals in plastic models (Wal-Mart, if nowhere else). When purchasing a model, keep a couple of things in mind. First, try and stay with cars. The way the rules of the game are set up, cars tend to be more efficient to build and play. Therefore, pickups and vans, while having the potential to look really cool, ought to be avoided at first.

Selecting a car model can be tricky. There's a good chance that everybody is going to want sports cars. That's great, but I'd encourage variety. A field full of Ferarris and Porsches, no matter how they're tricked out, is going to look too uniform. In addition to the sports cars, I would recommend older cars (stuff from the 50's through the 70's -- big old boats and lean muscle cars). These look mean, and have lots of flat surfaces on them for turrets, weapon pods, etc. Additionally, stock car models can look really good (they've got all the roll cage stuff inside, and there's already only one seat), as do concept car models (the Stingray III, GT-90, and others). Concept cars are not readily identifiable by anyone walking by your game. They also look futuristic, reflecting the game's setting. Several model companies, including Monogram, also make, or have made, a line of weird show car designs that look nothing like any other car (the driver's seat is centered, the car isn't symmetrical, or whatever). These are great, if you can find them. Don't rule out the little cars either. There's little more satisfying then taking out a Cadillac with an upgunned Miata, and compacts add variety to the field. Above all, when selecting your car, be original.

The kits themselves don't have to be super detailed. Many buyers of plastic model kits are looking for detail, and that's what the companies cater to, but it's not necessarily what you should be looking for in a ***Car Wars*** model. Ease of assembly should be a high priority. There are a lot of good snap-together model kits out there, which brings us to our next point.

I've even seen players skip the kit step entirely, and buy a die-cast car from a toy store. Such cars are available at most toys stores, and many are 1:24 scale. This is also the only way to get 1:24 scale motorcycles that I've ever seen.

Assembly and Accessorizing

When assembling your model, be aware that you will be handling it often. Some kits have opening hoods, trunks, and even doors, and I suggest gluing those down so they don't flap around in transit or during the game. Gluing it all down also makes painting the body easier -- you can spray the whole thing at once rather than painting the individual pieces and then trying to put them together without getting glue all over the stuff you've already painted.

Speaking of glue, avoid the classic Testors glue in the orange or blue tube. It takes a long time to dry, which can be a hassle, and the bond it creates breaks down relatively quickly. I suggest a good CA (that's cyanoacrylate) glue. Good model stores will carry it, sometimes in the radio-controlled airplane section; just ask. CA glue dries quickly and bonds for a long time. It can sometimes get brittle, but if you handle your models carefully it shouldn't be a problem at all.

When assembling the model, feel free to skip steps. If you're gluing the hood down, you needn't feel obligated to assemble the engine -- you're never going to see it, after all. In most cases, the engine is not critical to the structural integrity of the model (I recall a persnickety Lotus Esprit model that had no place to mount the back wheels unless the engine was present -- though this is the exception rather than the rule). Additionally, the engine pieces can be used later when putting weapon mounts on your car -- cylinder heads especially make neat dropped weapon dispensers. The engine isn't the only thing you can skip. Most vehicles for ***Car Wars*** have only one crewman, and no room for any others, so leave out the passenger seat. If you are going to tack extra pieces of sheet plastic over the windows, don't bother putting the clear plastic ones in. The same is true for ramplates -- if you're planning to put a big piece of sheet plastic over the front end, don't worry about putting the grille on. Be creative, and let your creativity save you assembly time.

Once the car is more or less together, go ahead and stick weapons on it. If you've been collecting tabletop wargaming figures (like the ones by Citadel or Heartbreaker), you probably have what's called a "bit box," wherein you stash all the stray parts and extra bits that come with those sorts of figures. Bit boxes are gold mines to the creative super-scale player. Anything can become a gun, and if not a gun, just a nifty looking accessory. Don't forget any spare parts that were left over from the model kit, and if you collected the old four-inch-high G.I. Joe action figures, their weapons and equipment are readily cannibalized. Again, be creative.

What's that? You don't play tabletop stuff, your mom thought G.I. Joe was a tool of Satan, and you bought one of those pesky Lotus Esprit models that require full assembly? Don't fret, help is available, it will just take a little longer. I mentioned good model and hobby stores earlier. They ought to carry a selection of plastic sheet and tube stock, from which weapons can be scratch-built. Certain model companies that specialize in military stuff, notably DML, make packs of weapons, some of which are ideal. You could also go in with your friends and buy a couple of tank models, from which you can cannibalize the weapons (not just the big cannon, either -- most tank models have several secondary machineguns and launchers which are a little more to scale).

Things to keep in mind when mounting weapons center mainly on a familiarity with the rules. I try to build models with a specific design in mind, and then try to stay true to the idea when designing the actual car. That way, everybody has some idea what everybody else has mounted on their car just by looking at the model. Ergo, I would counsel

against turning your model into a rolling arsenal. Mount the number and type of guns you think you'd like the car to have, and then design it accordingly when its time to play.

Once the model is totally together, you'll need to mount it on a base, which brings us to the question of scale. ***Car Wars*** is played in an inch scale. The car counters that come with the game are one inch long and half an inch wide, and all movement is measured in one inch increments. It is easy to extrapolate other scales from that base. For the purposes of super-scale ***Car Wars*****,** multiply all dimensions by eight -- that is, the base for super-scale cars will be eight inches long, and four inches wide. Bases can be made of anything as long as the material is good and stiff, and somewhat resistant to the elements. Plywood works well, though without power tools it can be difficult to get it cut straight. Illustration board (really thick cardboard with one nicely finished side) works very well, and is available at art or blueprint supply stores. Illustration board doesn't have the resilience of plywood, but it doesn't need to be painted (or sanded, for that matter), and can be easily cut with a hobby knife. Once you've decided what you want to mount your car on, and have a piece cut to the right size, center the car on the base and glue the tires down. Once dry, you have a model car ready for play.

Counters

We've already discussed weapon mounts for the models, but we need to address template weapons now. Most dropped weapons, and certain dischargers and the like, leave counters behind indicating a patch of oil, a pile of spikes, or whatever. The ***Car Wars*** rules come with several sheets of such counters, in all varieties, to be cut out and used when needed. You will need to make new counters in super-scale: they will measure either 4"x8" or 4"x4", depending on the weapon they are supposed to be dropped from. Counters can simply be cut out of posterboard and have the name of the counter written in big letters across it (SPIKES, MINES, OIL, SMOKE, etc.), or you can get creative. This is a visual game, after all, why not go all the way?

Oil counters can have a large black blotch colored on them in magic marker. Smoke could be a grey blotch. Mines and spikes can go one of two ways. Keeping them two-dimensional makes them easy to move models across, but taking them into 3-D makes them look more imposing. 2-D spikes can be represented by sticking several foil stars to each counter, while 3-D spikes can be done by getting several packs of cheap plastic jacks from the local bargain store, cutting off one arm so they lay flat on the counter, and gluing them down. Mines are best represented by washers glued in a random pattern on the counter. Hardware stores carry a vast array of the things. Some are flat and some are not. Go see what's available and decide for yourself what you think looks best. Whatever you decide to use, try not to put more than three or four stars, jacks, washers, or whatever on each counter so they don't get too cluttered. You should also write in small letters along one side of the counter what it represents, to avoid confusion.

There are two types of dropped weapon that deserve separate attention; flaming oil and ice. Ice is fairly easy. Your local craft store should carry sheets of adhesive-backed silvery prismatic stuff. This can be easily cut to the size of the counter and stuck down. Flaming oil can be a little tricky. The best way I've found to deal with it is to stick a little piece of adhesive magnet (the stuff they make refrigerator magnets out of -- available at the same craft store you bought the ice stuff from) in the center of each oil template. I also have a bunch of firebursts cut out of red posterboard with a little metal washer glued to the underside. If the oil is on fire, I stick the fireburst to the magnet. If not, no fireburst. That way, flaming oil is easy to distinguish from regular oil, and I don't have to make an entirely different set of counters for the two.

You will also need counters to represent pedestrians (in case a driver bails out of a flaming wreck), Debris (bits left behind when cars take damage), and Obstacles (lost wheels, large amounts of bits left behind when cars take lots of damage, etc). I haven't determined a decent way to do these -- 1:24 scale people are in short supply (though the G.I. Joe figures whose gear you cannibalized make passable pedestrians), and while you could glue engine blocks, stray doors, tires, or whatever to your debris and obstacle counters, I don't. The reason I don't is that they usually come into high demand (lots of cars lose lots of bits in a duel), and so I need a big stack of them. For these three types, I just write the name in big letters on the counters so they are easily identifiable.

When doing your counters remember one thing: Be creative, but don't spend a fortune. Make counters as you think you'll need them -- if no one in your group ever uses a minedropper, don't bother making the counters for it.

The Playing Field, and Moving On It

Each car is mounted on an eight-inch-long base, and eight inches becomes the standard measurement for movement. This can pose a problem when looking for a playing surface -- a super-scale car traveling at 50 mph will move 40 scale inches across the field in a turn (just over three feet). The minimum size playing area for SSCW is a square 20-25 feet across. 30 to 40 feet works better, as there's more maneuvering room, but the smaller one will work if there's absolutely nowhere else to play. Gym floors are ideal, with dorm hallways and common rooms coming in a close second, but the parking lot of your local game shop will work fine. Parking lots, outdoor basketball courts, and the like have the added advantage of chalkability -- you can draw dropped weapon counters with chalk rather than having to make them.

You will need some sort of marker to delineate the boundaries of the field. I got some bricks, painted them a friendly caution yellow, and use them to mark the corners. Bricks have worked well for me, as they are big enough to be seen, and heavy enough to not be "accidentally" nudged aside by a player whose car is on a collision course.

Movement in the ***Car Wars*** rules is given in inches, and this is easily converted into lengths. That is, 1 inch as listed in the rules becomes one 8-inch length in super-scale. The easiest way to work movement is with a ruler. Tape measures work for calculating ranges, but moving the cars is easier with a yardstick. I got a bunch of them (so each of my players could have one, and not fight over them) at a local school supply store, and marked them in eight inch increments. That way, the car can just be moved from mark to mark and has moved one length -- no counting or math is involved (that comes later).

You will also need to make at least one super-scale turn key. This is best done with thick cardstock, or the illustration board we mentioned earlier. One poster sized sheet will make one key, and you will need a protractor or other angle-measuring device to mark the turns correctly. Make each flat side measure 8 inches, mark it the same way the stock turn key is marked, and you're ready to go.

Targeting, Wrecks, and Other Mayhem

Earlier, I mentioned a tape measure. You will need one for SSCW, preferably one at least 25 feet long. You will use it to measure ranges from car to car when calculating targeting modifiers (remember to multiply the range bands listed in the book by eight).

When a car wipes out, be careful. It is tempting to go ahead and turn a car that has gone into a roll onto its top, and this does look cool, but it can knock things off the model, and keeping the models nice is the key to long-lasting enjoyment of the game. Estimate whether or not the car will be driveable, or even intact, when it finally comes out of its roll, spin, flip, or whatever, and if it is not likely to survive the crash, just remove the model from the field. Another option is to leave the model on the ground, move it as it would given the uncontrolled maneuver it is executing, and place a marker next to it indicating what is happening to it. Alternately (and this is my favorite) take one of your old car models (you know, the one you got for your birthday when you were ten, and that didn't get assembled very well), give it a good whack with a hammer, glue the wreckage to a 4x8 base, and make it the official "wipe-out" counter. Replace your model with the wipe-out counter as needed.

The ***Car Wars*** rules are pretty complete, but (as is the case with nearly all tabletop games) you will encounter situations that are barely glanced at in the rules, and some that are not addressed at all. In these situations, be calm. Without doubt, someone is going to get a raw deal as a result of the situation, and in such a case, everybody needs to take a deep breath, realize that the rules allow for some pretty amazing stuff (safe 90-degree turns at 80 mph), and roll with it.

The point of the game is to have fun, and that's what these conversion tips are all about. Everybody has had fun at one time or another crashing their Matchbox cars together, and super-scale ***Car Wars*** is just the next step. Good hunting.

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Whistling in the Dark: GenCon Wrap Up

by Kenneth Hite

Well, you can't blame Andon* for the rain. A deluge of Noachian proportions swept through Milwaukee on Wednesday and Thursday, leaving the downtown damp and humid for the rest of the weekend. The rain also made it even less convenient to get between the brand-new Midwest Express Convention Center (MWEC, or "emweck," to us cognoscenti) and the old Arena-Bruce Hall complex where the miniatures gamers were exiled. So much less convenient, as a matter of fact, that I never even walked the two blocks to hit the auction there. MWEC itself was an interesting new venue, all shiny and burnished -- GenCon was only the second convention it hosted, although since the Governors' Conference was the first, all the lights and plumbing worked. The center is built in a sort of "salute to the 1980s S&L crisis" style which was a big change from the "salute to the 1960s public high school" style of MECCA. The escalators kept stopping for some reason dealing either with load or with safety (I heard both), which might have been avoided if the exhibit hall wasn't bizarrely placed on the third floor. You have not lived until you have watched trucks circle for two hours waiting to get to a third-floor loading dock. In the rain. The rain also delayed They Might Be Giants' open-air street concert for half an hour and truncated the opening act (Vancouver's own The Darkest of the Hillside Thickets, the unchallenged champions of Lovecraftian surf-punk) to a criminally short 40 minutes or so.

Which was about how long you had to wait to get your badge after paying, if you showed up without preregistration in the afternoon, according to many, many disgruntled gamer reports. Andon only had one badge printer (and, in a stroke of genius, only one credit-card reader, apparently) for all the registration booths -- attendees were kept in a holding pen while an increasingly hoarse volunteer shouted the badge name of the next lucky winner. Events were another problem: deciphering the schedule was harder work for some than it should have been (my early training in Mayan epigraphy came in handy here), and seminars were woefully misplaced and underpromoted. Apparently some gamers (including, ironically, the TSR LARP) found their events simply moved, on occasion repeatedly, without notice as Andon double-booked some rooms. (My ***Call of Cthulhu*** demos were, by contrast, all where they should have been, and I noticed no problems myself besides overcrowding and high noise levels in the game rooms.) This is the first Andon-run event that I've heard this many complaints about: at every other convention, whatever else you think about their practices, they made the trains run on time. But the scale and scope of GenCon had them defeated months before it started: the 48-hour turnaround on preregistration became two weeks in some cases.

That scale and scope, by the way, may have reached as high as 20,000 attendees, although I also heard the number 17,000 being bandied about authoritatively. GenCon 1996 claimed an attendance of 30,000, but this number could very well have been inflated by TSR's alleged former practice of counting holders of 4-day passes as four people. Either way, the show did seem smaller to me: even on Saturday afternoon I could see wide stretches of empty carpet on the floor of a much smaller exhibit hall. Which, counter to bland assurances when the prices were being jacked up for exhibitors, did indeed still have some bad spots, especially after the uneven traffic flow was jammed up entirely by the human barricades lined up to get Jeri Ryan's autograph. This, of course, happened right at peak buying hours on Saturday afternoon. (Last Unicorn Games' requests for some degree of sanity in traffic management and timing on the autograph sessions, which they partially sponsored, were ignored.)

Despite this, every exhibitor on the floor that I spoke to (and, since I spent nigh every moment that wasn't running demos on the exhibit floor, I spoke to a good many) reported land-office business. At the Chaosium booth, where I spent the majority of my time as a booth guy, Lynn Willis and Sandy Petersen's ***Call of Cthulhu 5.5 Expanded and Revised*** simply evaporated, and the newest ***Call of Cthulhu*** adventure, Sam Johnson's ***No Man's Land,*** sold so fast I didn't even get my comp copy! Everyone had record sales, selling out of some products as early as Friday (including Avalanche Press' alternate history wargame ***Naval War Plan Orange,*** which I desperately wanted). Companies that always lose money at GenCon lost less, some broke even, and a few clever folks made a profit even at the inflated new booth prices. Said booth prices certainly did their job of keeping the small companies away; I saw many fewer Two Guys In A Basement Game Co. booths than I have previously. They were replaced by more used game retailers, a positive improvement from my selfish perspective (I scored, among other things, copies of ***GURPS Bestiary*** and ***GURPS Space Bestiary.***); more booths selling knicknacks, crystals, tchotchkes, T-shirts and similar drivia, which I

suppose the kids like; and a whole lot more computer game booths, which drove me into a state of Luddite rage the likes of which I've never felt after about the 40,000th "whirrr-SLAMMM-chunk-BOOM" echoed across the floor while I was trying to conduct business.

Why were sales so good if attendance was down and the floor was impassable at strategic moments and nobody could find their demos? Because the distribution system in America has cratered so badly, and so many game shops have closed down in the wake of the Marvel bankruptcy and the ***Magic*** deflation, that the games aren't reaching the customers who desperately want them. We were selling to people who literally could not find games to buy, except at GenCon. Products months old, such as Jonathan Tweet's ***Cloaks*** for ***Over The Edge*** and my own ***Major Arcana*** for ***Nephilim*** sold like new releases. Those record sales are the silver lining of a very large thunderhead indeed.

But they also demonstrate that quality games are still out there, and that people want to buy them. There's still reservoirs and thirsty people, it's just that the pipelines are gone. The best new game at the show was Baron Munchausen and James Wallis' ***The Extraordinary Adventures of Baron Munchausen*** from Hogshead Publishing, followed by Jeff Tidball's ***Cults Across America,*** Atlas Games' boardgame of Cthulhoid domination. The best new old game at the show was Pharos Press' reprint of Paul Kidd's classic game of fantasy-Enlightenment swordplay and romance, ***Lace and Steel.*** The best new game not quite at the show yet was John Tynes' and Greg Stolze's brilliant and creepy action-occultism game ***Unknown Armies,*** from Archon Games. (It ships this week, but Archon had Xeroxed ashcans available on Sunday.) The hottest game of the show was either Last Unicorn Games' new ***Star Trek: The Next Generation RPG*** (which, modesty forbids me from telling you all, is beautiful, well-written, and plays well with others) by Christian Moore, Ross Isaacs, (ahem) Kenneth Hite and Steve Long; or Shane Lacy Hensley's ***Deadlands: Hell on Earth,*** a post-Apocalypse game set in one future of the smash-hit ***Deadlands.*** Phil Masters and Terry Pratchett's ***GURPS Discworld*** was there at the Atlas Games booth by arrangement with SJG, although I'm afraid I didn't even get a chance to look at it, consumed as I was with the appearance of ***Fall of the Malakim.*** It seemed to be selling well, although I don't know how many Atlas had brought with them. Jonathan Tweet came by the Chaosium booth and told me to make sure to look at Aaron Rosenberg's ***Spookshow*** from Clockworks, although the tag line ("You live. You die. You come back as a spy.") had already sold me. The TSR castle, White Wolf chateau, and FASA skyline were all present and accounted for, but I missed West End and Avalon Hill as well as Steve Jackson Games, Dream Pod 9, Palladium and R. Talsorian. One way or another, victims of interesting times.

The future looks interesting as well, but in good ways as well as bad: White Wolf was showing off art and material from the upcoming (in, natch, October) revised ***Vampire: the Masquerade,*** and John Wick told me that AEG has ***The Seventh Sea,*** a game that will do for pirates what Rokugan and ***Legend of the Five Rings*** did for samurai, on track for spring of 1999. Sometime between those two games, I think Pagan Publishing will release ***Countdown,*** the newest ***Delta Green*** sourcebook. Fall should also see FASA's newest miniatures game, the alternate-air war of ***Crimson Skies,*** which I heard rocked in demos. The ***Deep Space Nine RPG*** emerges from Last Unicorn in February of 1999, with ***Star Trek: The Original Series*** due in August and a ***Voyager RPG*** due in 2000. The quality will still be there, it seems; the gamers didn't act like they were going anywhere; the rest is in the lap of the gods. And, more frighteningly, of Andon.

*Andon Unlimited, the convention management company owned by Wizards of the Coast which ran GenCon for the first time this year. Precious little "management" in view this time around.

Faerie Glamours

by Ken & Jo Walton

Art by Glenn Kristoffersen

True Thomas lay on the grassy bank,
And he beheld a lady gay,
A lady that was brisk and bold,
Come riding o'er the ferny brae.

Her skirt was of the grass-green silk,
Her mantle of the velvet fine,
On every strand of her horse's mane
Hung fifty silver bells and nine.

True Thomas he took off his hat,
And bowed him low down to the knee,
"All hail, thou mighty Queen of Heaven!
For your peer on earth I never did see."

"Oh no, Oh no, True Thomas," she says,
"That name does not belong to me;
I am but the queen of fair Elfland,
And I'm come here for to visit thee.

"But you must go with me now, Thomas,
True Thomas, you must go with me,
For you must serve me seven years,
Through well or woe as chance may be."

-- from the Scottish ballad, "Thomas the Rhymer"

These rules are intended for GMs and players who wish to run Faerie games using the ***GURPS*** rules. They do not cover the entire spectrum of beliefs about faeries (which cover 2000 years of history and the whole of Europe) but are a "snapshot" of beliefs about the nature of faeries in Elizabethan England. (Pagan Celtic faerie beliefs are covered in ***GURPS Celtic Myth.***) There is not room in an article this size to cover faerie types and beliefs in any detail -- check out the books mentioned at the end for ideas. An example of a faerie type is given below, to give GMs some ideas on how to create faerie types of their own.

Heroic Faeries

Origin

Heroic faeries were common in Medieval romances, particularly French Arthurian sources. They are a dwindled form of the heroic Sidhe from Celtic mythology (which are described in ***GURPS Celtic Myth,*** and carried on into Elizabethan times in such works as Spenser's *Faerie Queene.*

Description

Heroic faeries are always supremely beautiful in appearance (though this may sometimes be a glamour to hide a more

ugly reality). The appear to be tall, lordly humans, usually with golden hair and very fair skin.

Habits

Heroic faeries are the aristocracy of the faerie world. They dress in a manner similar to the knights and ladies of the medieval court and spend their days in courtly pursuits such as jousting, hawking, hunting, gossiping and plotting against each other. They will often take a human lover just for the fun of it, but are equally likely to scorn that lover if some petty taboo is broken. Lovers scorned in this way will often pine away from lovesickness, but it is unlikely that the faerie will care. Since Heroic Faeries are unageing, they are likely to have phenomenally high skill levels -- a 500-year-old faerie knight is likely to be more than a match for a human 25-year-old, no matter how well-trained.

Advantages

Appearance: Very Handsome (25 points), Glamourie: 10 levels (50 points), Unageing* (15 points).

Disadvantages

Capricious (-15 points), Dread: Christian Symbols* (-10 Points), Faerie Prohibition (-30 points), Vulnerability: Iron* (-10 points).

Advantages and Disadvantages marked with a * are from ***GURPS Fantasy Folk 2nd Edition***

Glamours

Illusion: Level 5 (60 points), Insubstantiality: Level 4 (40 points), any others according to character conception.

Base Cost: 125 points

New Disadvantages

Capricious -15 points

Your moods are totally unpredictable. One minute you are happy and laughing, the next you are ferociously angry, or burst into tears. People who know you are extremely wary around you, since they do not know how you will react to anything they do or say; they react to you at -2. If you are in a position of authority, or have the power to get your own way due to physical or magical power, your subordinates will be frightened of you, and will react at -4. In any stressful or emotionally charged situation you must make a roll on 1d6. On an even roll, your emotions stay the same; on an odd roll, your emotions become completely different. The GM may also require you to make a roll at any time, for whatever reason. (GM's can be as capricious as they like about this!) Or just roleplay it.

Capricious is a disadvantage particularly suited to faerie characters, who often behave in this way.

Faerie Prohibition -30 points

You may not directly take the life of a mortal. You may kill by trickery but never by a physical or magical attack.

The prohibition does not stop you from causing someone's death by creating an illusion (e.g. of a broad meadow where there is a narrow path along a cliff-edge) or by compelling them to do something until they die of exhaustion. You may also harass them physically with pinches and pinpricks, wither their limbs with curses or drive them mad by any method. Indirect means of killing are perfectly acceptable, direct ones are not. This is a case of keeping the letter of the prohibition while breaking the spirit, but it has been allowed so far.

This prohibition applies only to killing mortals -- killing other faeries is acceptable.

New Advantage

Faerie Sight 5 points

In a world with faeries, there will usually be some rare individuals with the ability to see through faerie glamours. This advantage is usually called Faerie Sight, and it is said that those with this ability have a touch of faerie blood somewhere in their past. A character with this advantage may make an Eyesight roll to see things which others cannot see (what sort of things this will include will depend on the GM's campaign world). This advantage is usually inborn, but can sometimes be given by the application of Faerie Ointment. (See below for using Faerie Sight against Glamourous Illusions).

Glamourie 5 points/level

You have the racial ability to cast Faerie Glamours. Each level of Glamourie allows you to cast/maintain one Glamour at *base level.* Additional levels of Glamourie may be used to cast further Glamours, or to raise Glamours above their base level. The maximum number of levels a faerie creature may have is determined in its racial characteristics.

For the purposes of Contests of Glamourie, your Glamourie is defined as HT+Glamourie (see below). Unlike magical spells, Glamourie is an inborn advantage, and cannot be learned. It is not related to intelligence -- even a stupid faerie can cast powerful Glamours. It is an instinctive reaction, not related to intelligence, though an intelligent faerie will naturally be cleverer in the way he *uses* his glamours.

Rules for Glamourie

Principles of Glamourie

Glamourie is the natural inborn magical ability of the denizens of faerie. Casting a glamour is as natural to a faerie as breathing or eating; it is not something which can be taught, like magic. Either a faerie is born with a glamour, or is not; glamours cannot be gained later in life.

The prerequisite for a faerie to be able to cast glamours is the Glamourie advantage, which comes in a number of levels. Particularly powerful members of the Seelie Court might have up to 15 levels of Glamourie; minor hobs and goblins only 1.

Each level of Glamourie allows the caster to cast or maintain one level of a particular Glamour. A faerie can never cast more glamours than he has levels of glamourie, and the number of glamours he is casting may be *lower* than this if he is maintaining some glamours above his *base level* (see below).

Glamours

Glamours are racial advantages which faeries may use. They are much like spells in their effect, though they are often more powerful. Unlike spells, they cannot be learned. Also unlike spells, they do not cost stamina to cast or maintain (except Instant Glamours in certain circumstances, see below). They also do not need a skill roll of any sort to cast, unless they are being resisted.

Base Level

A faerie has a glamour at *base level*. This level is determined by the type of the faerie. A faerie can cast a glamour at

base level *or below,* using only one level of Glamourie. If the faerie wants to cast the glamour at a higher level, he must put more levels of Glamourie into it. Each level of Glamourie put into a glamour will raise the level of that Glamour by one.

Mandrake has three levels of Beast Glamour. In order to maintain it at level 3 or below, he must put one level of Glamourie into it. If he wants to raise his Beast Glamour to level four, he must put two levels of Glamour into it.

Casting a Glamour

There are two types of glamour, Instant Glamours, and Constant Glamours. Each of them is bought in the same way, but they are cast slightly differently.

Note that when casting a glamour, *no roll is required unless the glamour is being resisted.*

Instant Glamours

Instant glamours work on the target *instantly,* and need not be maintained. These glamours include Blessing, Curse and Madness. An instant glamour begins to work on the target the moment it is cast. Instant Glamours have two components, an effect and a duration. The effect tells what the glamour will do to the target, the duration tells how long this effect will last. The effect will *always* last as long as specified by the caster. *It does not need to be maintained*. The caster can go away and use his Glamourie for other purposes and the target will still be affected by the duration put on the glamour by the caster. This is only negated by an opposing glamour which can counteract the glamour cast. (See individual glamours for details.)

An Instant Glamour can only be cast on a single target, by the caster *three times in his entire lifetime!* i.e. He can be Blessed three times, Cursed three times, and sent mad three times by any one individual faerie. Further attempts to cast the same glamour will have no effect on that individual. A faerie who has previously cast an Instant Glamour on a target will recognise that target, no matter how he is disguised. The act of casting an Instant Glamour on a target forms a bond between caster and target, which can never be broken.

Each Instant Glamour has an *effect* and a *duration.* Using one level of Glamourie, a faerie may cast an Instant Glamour at his base level, which will have the base effect for the base duration. So a faerie with Curse at level 3 can cast a Curse with a level 3 effect for a level 3 duration. A further level of Glamourie put into the glamour will raise *either* the effect, *or* the duration, *but not both.* Also, raising either the effect or the duration of the Instant Glamour will cause the caster to lose 1 HT, permanently. This HT will not be regained until the player has spent the requisite character points to get the HT back up to what it was before. Blessings, Curses and the like are not given lightly. The HT is not lost until the Instant Glamour is successfully cast. If the caster is interrupted, the HT is not lost, nor is it lost if the target is immune due to having had that glamour cast on him before.

Instant Glamours *cannot* be *cast* instantly. The words of the Curse, Blessing, etc., must be spoken aloud, and this takes a number of seconds. This will normally be two seconds, but the GM may rule that a particularly involved curse or blessing may take longer to say. During the time the Instant Glamour is being cast, the caster must *concentrate,* and cannot do anything else (although Constant Glamours will be maintained, of course). If the faerie is struck, or otherwise interrupted in a startling way, the GM may rule that a Will roll must be made, or the speech will be interrupted and the caster must begin again. A faerie with Compel may Compel the subject to take no action while the Instant Glamour is being cast, in order to prevent any startling moves.

For instance, Mandrake has Curse at Level 2. He can cast a Curse with a Level 2 Effect, which will last a Level 2 Duration. (i.e. all the subject's rolls are at -4 until cock-crow.) If Mandrake puts another level of Glamourie into the Curse and a point of HT, he can make it a curse with a Level 3 Effect and a Level 2 Duration (subject struck blind until cock-crow) or a Curse with a Level 2 Effect and a Level 3 Duration (subject at -4 until the full moon). But if he wants a Curse with Level 3 effect *and* Level 3 duration, he must add *two* levels of Glamourie to his base level, and lose 2 HT. (The GM may rule that "May you be struck blind until cock-crow!" takes three seconds to say.)

A faerie can always cast an Instant Glamour at a level *below* his base level (in effect and/or duration) but it will always cost a *minimum* of one level of Glamourie. He *cannot* take levels out of base duration to put into effect, or vice versa.

Constant Glamours

A Constant Glamour is one which *must* be maintained. As long as the Glamour continues, the caster must be using the requisite number of levels of Glamourie. While it is maintained, these levels of Glamourie *cannot* be used for anything else.

A Constant Glamour may be cast instantly. If the faerie is in combat, he may do the normal things that may be done in combat *and* switch a Constant Glamour on or off as well. The Constant Glamour will begin to take effect at the beginning of the Faerie's turn. Casting a Glamour is as natural to a faerie as drawing a breath, and takes no more thought.

Once a Constant Glamour is cast, it will stay on until it is switched off or its level is changed. It requires no concentration from the caster. A Constant Glamour will stay on even if the faerie is asleep, but all Constant Glamours will, of course, cease to have any effect if the faerie dies.

Defensive Glamourie

If a faerie is rendered unconscious, or if his HT reaches 0, all levels of Glamourie will immediately be put into Insubstantiality. If the character is still conscious, the player may decide which, if any, of his remaining glamours stay active. If the character is unconscious, all other glamours immediately cease to be active. A conscious character may resist this defence mechanism at Will-4 if he is conscious.

Glamours

Beast Glamour Constant; 5 points/level

Allows the caster to summon, control and speak to a number of creatures equal to his level of Beast Glamour. It will not work on any race which normally has an IQ of 8 or more. A beast is defined as any non-human and non-faerie creature; this includes water-dwelling creatures and birds, as well as land animals. All faerie animals are at +4 to Will rolls when making a Contest of Wills with the caster. The caster may only be in contact with a number of creatures equal to his level of Beast Glamour. For instance, a faerie with five levels of Beast Glamour could control three horses while summoning an eagle and speaking to a salmon, but it he wanted to contact another creature, he must relinquish contact with one of the others.

The caster can do any of the following:

Summoning: The caster of Beast Glamour can summon any beast(s) within five miles of himself -- if no creature of the type summoned is within five miles, no creature will come, but the caster will know that it is not coming. A successful Naturalist roll will tell the caster what creatures are likely to be in the vicinity. Also, Beast Glamour cannot summon fish out of water, or land creatures to the depths of the ocean. To summon a creature, the caster must win a Contest of Wills with the creature. Each creature summoned requires a separate roll. Once summoned, the beast will stay close to the summoner until it is dismissed or commanded to do something. The animal summoned must come to the summoner as quickly as it can, but it may be a while before a small creature travels five miles!

Control: Allows the caster to control a beast or beasts. The caster must win a Contest of Wills with the beast. He can then control the beast(s), telling it what to do in any given situation. This may range from making the beast carry the caster (or another) to making the beast fight for the caster. The control will only last for as long as the glamour is maintained. While the glamour is maintained, the beast will show no signs of fatigue, but when control is relinquished, it will immediately gain 1 Fatigue for every half-hour it has been controlled.

Speech: Lets the caster communicate with a beast, in the creature's own "language." The amount of information exchanged depends on the animal's intelligence; no creature below the level of a bird will be likely to know much of interest. An ant may crawl over gold, but it knows only that the material is hard and inedible . . . Each minute that the glamour is maintained allows one question and answer. The caster may only communicate with one beast at a time, no matter what his level of Beast Glamour.

Limitation: Only effects only one species of beast. -50%

Blessing Instant; 20 points/level

With this glamour, the caster can put a blessing on the subject. The usefulness of the blessing, and the duration of the effect, depends upon the level of the Glamour. The caster must be within three hexes of the subject to perform a blessing, and the blessing must be spoken aloud. Blessing can also be used to remove a Curse of the same level and duration -- the caster must touch the subject and roll IQ+Glamourie to correctly identify the Curse -- failure means that the Curse is not identified and no action can be taken. The caster may put a blessing on any one target three times in the target's lifetime (see Instant Glamours, above).

Time:

Level 1: until a bird flies over your head (3d6 minutes)
Level 2: until cock-crow
Level 3: until the full moon
Level 4: a year and a day
Level 5: seven years and a day
Level 6: Permanent unless removed with Bless.

Power:

Level 1: One of the subjects skills (chosen by the caster) is at +4 for the duration of the Blessing, or one of the subject's stats is at +1.

Level 2: The subject is given one of the following for the duration of the blessing:
1. Acute Eyesight +3. If the subject has Poor Eyesight, this will be "cured" instead for the duration of the blessing. The blessing does not effect Blindness.
2. Acute Hearing +3. If the subject has Hard of Hearing, this will be "cured" instead for the duration of the blessing. The blessing does not effect Deafness.
3. Voice. If the subject has Stuttering, this will be cured instead for the duration of the blessing. The blessing does not effect Mute.

Level 3: All the subjects rolls are at +4 for the duration of the blessing.

Level 4: The blessing cures one Physical or Mental Disadvantage for the duration of the blessing. This does not include Dependants, Enemies, Duties, Codes of Honour, etc.

Level 5: The blessing gives the subject one Physical or Mental Advantage up to the cost of 15 points. This does not include "social" advantages such as Military Rank or Allies, but *can* include Magical Aptitude. Only one level of Magical Aptitude can be given -- it cannot be raised at a later time by another Blessing. Wealth *can* be given in this way -- one level of wealth can be added to the character's wealth by this method. This will not come in the form of a bag of money, but should be decided by the GM based on the character so blessed. For instance, a merchant might unexpectedly receive a lucrative contract; a labourer might dig up an unexpected treasure trove; a court bureaucrat might be promoted. The blessing should come to pass within 1d6 days of the blessing being given, but should be fitted into the flow of the game, and should be surprising but not impossible.

Limitation: The caster must be in contact with the subject, -30%;

Limitation: the subject must be in eye contact with the subject, -20%.

Compel Constant; 10 points/level

With this glamour, the caster can change the actions and/or the emotions of one chosen individual. The caster must make eye contact with the individual in order to compel him, but once the compulsion has been cast, eye contact may be broken without the compulsion being lost, for as long as the glamour is maintained. If the caster also has the Curse glamour, the compulsion need not be maintained, but can be made to last a fixed amount of time, depending on the levels of duration put into the Curse.

Level 1: The caster can implant one emotion or belief in the subject, for the duration of the Compulsion. The player must tell the GM what emotion or belief is to be implanted, and it is up to the GM to interpret it for the player; the GM is allowed to tone down or disallow any which he believes will unbalance the game. For example:

Emotions: Love, Lust, Hatred -- the subject can be made to feel this emotion *about one individual*. In the case of love or lust, this may be the caster. It is up to the player to interpret how he will roleplay the emotion. He will not act totally out of character, but should try to interpret the emotion within the character's normal behaviour. For example, a shy character overcome by lust will not leap on the object of her desire, but will attempt to persuade him to go to bed with her, whereas a bluff warrior type might just fling him over her shoulder and drag him off to bed.
Fear: this is fear of one individual or class of objects. The caster may specify "You are afraid of spiders," but not "You are afraid of everything around you." The fear can also be applied to an individual, particularly the caster. The fear is the equivalent of a *severe* phobia, and the subject who comes into contact with the object of his fear must make a Fright Check at -4.
Beliefs: This may be anything, but is the equivalent of a Major Delusion. The subject cannot be persuaded of anything totally against his character conception, (he can't for instance, be persuaded that he's a goldfish, or that he's somewhere he isn't). But he can be persuaded that other PCs are faeries, or that faeries don't exist, that the Pope is the Antichrist (unless the character is a fervent Catholic). If the player thinks that the belief goes totally against his character conception, the GM may allow a Will roll to resist.

Level 2: The caster may take over all the actions of the subject. He may make the character do exactly what he wants him to, and has access to all the character's skills, magical abilities etc. During the period of the compulsion, the subject is fully conscious of what he is doing, but believes that is what he wanted to do. Even after the compulsion has ended, he will believe that he was acting under his own will, and will try to justify to himself and others why he did what he did.

Curse Instant; 20 points/level

With this glamour, the caster can put a curse on the subject. The severity of the curse, and the duration of the effect, depends on the level of the Glamour. The caster must be within three hexes of the subject to perform a curse, and the curse must be spoken aloud. Curse can also be used to remove a Blessing of the same level and duration -- the caster must touch the subject and roll IQ+Glamourie to correctly identify the Blessing -- failure means that the Blessing is not identified and no action can be taken.

The subject is allowed one chance to resist, rolling a Quick Contest of Will vs IQ+Glamourie+Base Level of Curse.

Time:

Level 1: until a bird flies over your head (3d6 minutes)
Level 2: until cock-crow
Level 3: until the full moon
Level 4: a year and a day

Level 5: seven years and a day
Level 6: Permanent unless removed with Bless

Severity

Level 1: One of the subjects skills (chosen by the caster) is at -4 for the duration of the curse, or one of the subject's stats is at -1.

Level 2: All the subjects rolls are at -4 for the duration of the curse.

Level 3: The subject is struck blind or deaf or dumb for the duration of the curse. Alternatively, one of the subject's limbs is paralysed for the duration of the curse. The limb is considered crippled.

Level 4: Elf-stroke -- one side of the subject's body is paralysed (arm and leg crippled) and the subject is struck dumb for the duration of the curse.

Limitation: The caster must be in contact with the subject, -20%;

Limitation: the subject must be in eye contact with the subject, -20%.

Flight Constant; 5 points/level

This glamour enables the caster to swoop through the air like a bird. Speed is equal to *double* the caster's move. Each level above the first *doubles* the caster's move *or* allows the caster to carry another person in flight. To carry another person, the caster must be touching the subject, at least with the finger-tips -- the other person will then fly alongside. The Flight glamour does not confer the ability to do complex acrobatics and tight turns; for that, the caster needs the Flight skill.

Limitation: Caster cannot carry anyone else. Extra levels only add speed. -30%

Limitation: Caster cannot fly any faster. Extra levels only allow him to carry more people. -30%

Limitation: Caster needs object to fly. This might be a broomstick, a fresh sprig of a particular plant, an ointment etc. -10% to -50% depending on type and rarity of object.

Illusion Constant; 20 points for Level 1,

10 points per additional level

With this glamour, the caster can put a completely realistic illusion around someone or something, which will fool all the senses, including touch. If the caster wishes to make the illusion emotionally effecting to the viewer (awe-inspiring, terrifying, etc.) he must make a roll against Illusion Art skill. The important thing to remember with faerie illusions is that they are done instinctively by the faerie. The caster will constantly cast illusions around himself without thinking about it, and has no real concept of the difference between his illusions and reality. As far as a faerie is concerned, *everything* is an illusion of one sort or another -- what humans perceive as reality is merely the humans' consensus illusion. Everything is equally real, and equally illusory. Often these illusions will be very subtle, so that a faerie will constantly walk through a version of the real world which is just a *little* more beautiful than what is really there. Note that the Illusion cannot make objects which are present disappear, only cloak their true nature. A faerie can make a castle appear where none were before, and it will look and feel solid. But to make a castle *disappear* is more difficult. The castle can be made to appear like an empty space, but if anyone attempts to walk through the space, they will bump into the wall, and the illusion will be dispelled.

Level 1: The caster may cast an illusion shell around himself, making himself appear to be something he isn't. The

illusion cannot be bigger than seven feet tall, and 1 hex across, though it may be a completely different shape. This will usually be used by a faerie to make himself appear more beautiful, or more hideous than reality, to cloak himself in an illusion of fine clothing, to pass himself off as human etc. However, it can also be used to appear as a creature other than human. For instance, a faerie may wish to appear to be a giant snake. If the faerie then grapples a human, the human will feel as though the snake is wrapped around him, though the faerie will be unable to do more than normal damage. A diminutive faerie will often use this glamour to make himself appear to be a full-sized person. He will hover above a hex, casting a magnified illusion of his real self about him. Most faeries (particularly Trooping faeries) will have at least one level of Illusion about themselves at all times.

Level 2 and above: For every level of Illusion Glamour that the caster has above Level 1, he is able to extend an illusion in all directions by ten yards. This includes upwards. A faerie with two levels, for instance, could make an illusion of a small grove of trees. A faerie with ten levels of Illusion could make a palace of glass appear on a hill, and it would appear completely real to those entering.

Conflicting Illusions. When two or more faeries get together, it may be that they are both casting large scale illusions about themselves. In normal circumstances, the etiquette is that the faerie of lower status will submit to the illusion of the higher status faerie; for instance, if the higher status faerie is maintaining an illusion of a medieval court, the lower status faerie will change his appearance to fit in with this. A whole group of faeries will usually submit to the wishes of the highest status faerie, and their accumulated illusions can work wonders -- the court of Elf Queen is an illusion of epic proportions, with a huge palace and gardens, created by the whim of the Elf Queen and the consensus illusions of her courtiers.

However, sometimes two faeries will *not* agree on the illusion to be cast. In such a case, a Contest of Glamourie will be rolled (each rolling against HT+Glamourie); the winner will decide the surrounding illusion, although he *cannot* change an opponent's Level 1 illusion.

Lord Mandrake has a Level 10 Illusion of a medieval castle about him, and he himself appears to be a Norman knight. When another faerie, Lady Yarrow, arrives, she is dressed as an Elizabethan lady, and wishes her surroundings to match her. She has the same Status as Mandrake, and he does not want the surroundings changed, so they must make a Contest of Glamourie. Mandrake has HT+Glamourie of 14, Yarrow has 16. Mandrake rolls 13, making his roll by 1; Yarrow rolls 12, making her roll by 4. Therefore, Yarrow's more powerful illusion takes over, turning the medieval castle into a Renaissance manor house. However, if Mandrake wishes, he may keep his own image as that of a Norman knight, though he will look rather out of place. This would be rather a faux-pas in Faerie society (as well as being impolite, it's aesthetically unappealing!) so he gives in to Yarrow, and changes his Illusion to make himself appear as an Elizabethan courtier. After all, he doesn't want people whispering about him behind his back!

Insubstantiality Constant; 10 points/level

This glamour allows the caster to become less substantial. This effects not only the caster, but anything he is wearing or carrying -- it will not effect other living beings he is touching, however.

Level 1: The caster is very difficult to see, being semi- translucent. All Sight rolls to spot the caster are at -4, and all attacks against him are at -4 to skill level. The caster still leaves footprints, makes sounds etc., as normal.

Level 2: The caster is invisible. He still makes sounds, etc. as above., but cannot be seen at all. Anyone attempting to attack the caster must make a Hearing-2 roll to find him.

Level 3: The caster is invisible (as Level 2, above) and also semi-insubstantial. His body is curiously fluid. All physical attacks do only half normal damage, and the caster can squeeze through cracks, gaps and holes half the size he would normally be able to get through. (The caster can not however, fit into a container half his normal size - he has not become any smaller!) He finds it harder to manipulate objects; all DX rolls are at -4. His ST is also at -4, making damage from attack rolls correspondingly lower.

Level 4: The caster is invisible (as Level 2, above) and completely insubstantial. He can pass through solid objects as

though they aren't there, and physical attacks do no damage at all. He cannot manipulate objects at all, and can do no physical damage.

Madness Instant; 20 points/level

This glamour allows the caster to drive the subject mad. There are various effects possible, listed below. Depending on the level of Madness used, the effects will last a different amount of time.

Duration:

Level 1: For one night.
Level 2: Until the next full moon.
Level 3: For a year and a day.

All these effects can be removed with a fourth level Blessing of the same duration.

Catatonic: Subject stares into space and does nothing useful. If the subject is a mage, he will not maintain spells when they expire.

Fear: Subject becomes afraid of one individual or class of objects. The caster may specify "You are afraid of spiders", but not "You are afraid of everything around you." The fear can also be applied to an individual, particularly the caster. The fear is the equivalent of a *severe* phobia, and the subject who comes into contact with the object of his fear must make a Fright Check at -4.

Mindlessness: Reduces the subject's IQ to 1. The subject cannot use skills, talk, cast or maintain spells, or any other actions determined by the GM. The subject can walk, laugh, cry, drool, eat with hands, react to heat and cold, etc. He will have a very short attention span and notice only colours, pretty things, movement, and other things that a baby would be curious about. If the subject is a PC, the player should roleplay this state.

Nightmare: Gives the subject nightmares of the caster's choice. The subject need not be asleep when the glamour is cast -- it will come into effect the next time he goes to sleep. The subject will dream the same horrible dream every time he goes to sleep, and will wake up screaming. He will get no rest from a night's sleep, but will *lose* 2 stamina every night the Nightmare lasts. The effects of the glamour are cumulative. If the subject's ST falls to zero due to this spell, he falls into a coma, and will lose 1d HT each day until dying, unless the Madness is removed by a Blessing.

Resisting Glamours

Resisting Glamours with Glamourie or Magic Resistance

Only certain types of characters can hope to resist a Glamour. A faerie always has a chance to resist the Glamours of another faerie. In this case a Contest of Glamourie is rolled; both characters roll against HT+Glamourie.

A character with Glamourie may choose not to resist a Glamour -- he may, for instance be being blessed, or may actually wish to see a faerie's illusion.

Magic Resistance works in exactly the same way, except that it always resists, even against Blessings.

Resisting Illusions with Faerie Sight

A character who has the Faerie Sight advantage has a chance to see through the Illusion Glamour. He makes a contest of skills, his Eyesight against the faerie's Illusion Glamour. If the person making the Faerie Sight roll succeeds by the same or more than the faerie, he can see through the illusion to the reality beneath. There are two times when this Faerie Sight roll can be made. The first is when the human comes across the Illusion -- at this time, the GM makes a

secret roll, and then tells the player what he can see, illusion or reality. The player will only get a second chance at the roll if he suspects that what his character can see is an illusion. He may then inform the GM, who will make another secret roll, and inform the player of what he can see now. After that, the character will be convinced that what he can see is real, and no further rolls can be made unless a new Illusion Glamour is cast. (But note also the circumstances in which an Illusion can be dispelled, in the description of the Illusion Glamour).

Resisting Glamours with Christian Symbols

A character may attempt to resist glamours by using such holy symbols as crosses, the Bible, holy water, etc. On seeing or hearing such a thing, any faerie present must make a Fright Check (at -4, due to its racial disadvantage, Dread: Christian Symbols). This may be made with a modifier, according to the piety of the character using the holy symbol, etc. (GMs discretion). A faerie who fails a Fright Check rolls on the Fright Check table as usual, and also *puts all its levels of Glamourie into Insubstantiality*. This means that if the faerie fails the Fright Check, it, and all illusions it was maintaining, will vanish away. A Christian symbol will not keep faeries away by the mere act of being carried. The faerie must be shown the symbol. The GM may allow a character to make a Theology or Fast-Talk roll if the player chants suitably portentous phrases while waving the symbol; if the roll succeeds, the faerie is at a minus to his Fright Check equal to the amount by which the character succeeded.

Limitations

Some Glamours have limitations, which may apply to certain faerie types. The point cost for a Glamour with a limitation is correspondingly lower; see individual glamours for details.

On or Off?

Some faerie types have a habit of keeping certain of their glamours "switched on" all the time. For instance, Trooping Faeries will always have at least one glamour switched on, cloaking themselves in a fair-seeming appearance. Diminutive faeries will normally have four levels of Insubstantiality switched on, and will only switch it off in the rare circumstances in which they want to interact with the human world. Such habits are not a hard and fast rule; an individual faerie may use his glamours as he sees fit -- they are merely customs.

Recommended Reading

There are numerous books about Faeries, some good, some bad. Books particularly good for GMs wishing to create a Faerie campaign include:

A Dictionary of Fairies by Katherine Briggs.
Fairies and Elves in the Time-Life Books *Enchanted World* series.
Faeries by Brian Froud and Alan Lee.
The last two are particularly good for illustrations of faeries.

Useful novels include Michael Scott Rohan's *Lord of the Middle Air*, Ellen Kushner's *Thomas the Rhymer* and Ian McDonald's *King of Morning, Queen of Day.*

Other roleplaying games which have touched on Faerie include:
For Fairy, Queen and Country, a supplement for *The Amazing Engine* (TSR).
Faeries, a supplement for *Ars Magica* (Atlas Games).
Changeling: The Dreaming (White Wolf).

The Seattle-Tacoma Metroplex

A Setting for *GURPS Cyberworld*

by Bill Reed

Art by Lance S. Winkel

So, breetva, you want the inside info on the 'plex? Where to go, who sells what? Cross my palm with fold & listen up. Seattle's been around a long time, since 1851, and Tacoma, since 1880. From humble beginnings of timber processing and shipyards, Sea-Tac became a very prosperous area, with several colleges and high-tech corporations. In the late 20th, it was known as a city on the edge- new, hot tech; leaders in musical revolution such as Hendrix, Cobain, and Queensryche; a steadily growing economic base, and plenty of young, fresh minds to drive it into the next millenium. In 2017, the NERCC decided that it would be easiest to control the masses by grouping them into huge terrariums called Metroplexes. This way, they could set up walls and checkpoints all in the name of "National Security." So, the Seattle-Tacoma Metroplex District was established, and the Nerks came to town.

As of 2044, 4.76 million citizens live in the 'plex, not counting those here in the null zone, walled off because of the criminals & the TD sickos. Welcome to the metroplex, livewire. Looking Backways Twentywards, from the Northwest. 1997: The TD Pandemic. The Seattle & Tacoma communities had not yet jelled into a huge sprawl, so many areas survived, with healthcare available to most, but downtown Seattle was a slum where death stalked the poor and homeless. Even today in the null zone back alleys, bones of TD victims can still be found.

2006: The Grand Slam. As stock prices fell and businesses faltered, murder & suicides in the posh glass & chrome towers of the east side communities of Bellevue, Mercer Island, Kirkland & Redmond, skyrocketed as ancient fortunes crumbled overnight.

2007/2008: The Market Riots. Winter in December 2007 hit hard. Citizens, cold, sick, and poor, desperate for food, attacked National Guard troops as they rationed out food. Guardsmen and citizens were slain in droves, as survivalists, armed with automatic weaponry and specialized ammunition, cut them down with impunity. Many urban areas were left in ruin, looking more like areas of Afghanistan or Bosnia, than a U.S. city.

2010, April 24: Patterson's Anti-Occult Executive Order. This crackdown on "occult-related" organizations, activities, and literature incited riots at universities around Puget Sound as students' property was seized. Elsewhere bookstores, comic & trading card shops, and software stores were raided & often burned to the ground by National Guardsmen. Private BBS's went permanently off-line, some owners defending their property with screams of "freedom of speech!", others with firearms or other means of force. All went unheeded, the constitution trampled under the marching boots of Pro-Gov.

2017: The forming of NERCC. In Olympia, the state Capital, a large, but peaceful, march against the formation of the NERCC was in progress near the Capital Building, when a massive nuclear explosion tore through the buildings and the protestors alike. Some images were briefly captured as camera crews at the scene unknowingly broadcast their last seconds up to the satellites above. A local radical group, calling itself "The Sword of Gideon" was later found to be responsible, but all members were killed "resisting arrest" by NERCC officers. With Olympia an abandoned slag heap, new state Representatives were appointed by the Pro-Gov, and ordered to set up new legislative offices in the Sea-Tac Metro NERCC Compound, for their safety, and also dictated by Pro-Gov, due to the emergency, the Sea-Tac Metroplex would become the new Capital of Washington state. Immediately, work begun on a new facility on the east

side of the 'plex.

2024: The Permanent Emergency, the Pro-Gov, and the Riots. Downtown Seattle, already in bad shape, was completely isolated by the end of '24, turned into a "Null Zone". Bordered by the Chittenden locks (the waterway connecting Puget Sound with Lake Washington) on the north, Lake Washington on the east, Puget Sound to the west, and "The Wall", aka "The South 136th St. Security Barrier", on the south. I-5 still crosses the null zone, but on & off ramp connections have been demolished. Likewise, the I-90 connection between Seattle and Mercer Island has been demolished. Most citizens travelling North/South through the metroplex use the I-405 on the east side. Perhaps it is because of the signs at the NERCC checkpoints around the null zone:

YOU ARE NOW ENTERING A NULL ZONE. THE NERCC IS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR BODILY INJURY NOR DAMAGE TO PERSONAL BELONGINGS WHILE IN THE NULL ZONE. WHEN EXITING YOU MUST PROVIDE VALID ID. FAILURE TO DO SO WILL PREVENT EXIT FROM THE NULL ZONE.

The exits from the null zone are well guarded. NERCC checkpoints typically have 6-10 officers, 1-2 patrol cars, and a small APV. A local CitCard check is done on all citizens, and a cursory check of the vehicle. If anything unusual is found, a low level network check will be done on each card, and citizens will be detained for a complete search of themselves and any vehicles or packages.

Politics of the Metroplex

Everything's politics, it just depends on whether you swim with the big fish or the little ones. Here's what I know about the biggest in the 'plex.

Senator Charles Reading (Party: True Americans) At age 49, Charles has seen a lot come and go, excess is his middle name, too much to eat, drink, smoke, whatever. He has made a lot of enemies and he knows a lot of dark secrets.

Senator Amanda McDaniel (Party: Technolibertarian) At 52, this statuesque woman with creamy white skin and platinum blonde hair is on the NATComp Board of Directors. Sometimes referred to as the Ice Queen of NATComp.

State Representatives: Washington population is at 5.82 million, which yields 6 representatives, but they are mostly harmless dupes, with only a fraction of the power of the senators.

Washington State Governor: Irena Castle (Party: Efficiency Party) This raven haired beauty is an accomplished criminal lawyer. Charles Reading knows that she is the niece of Don Destefano, and has deep ties to the Mafia. She, on the other hand, knows many of his darkest secrets, as well.

Mayor of the Sea/Tac Metroplex: Martin Luther Terrence (Party: Centrist Democrat) Pro-Gov reluctantly went with Terrence in 2044, due to his overwhelming popularity in the metroplex. Since efforts to remove him quietly were ineffective, Bullock, not wanting another riot, approved his position.

The NERCC N. W. Regional Administrator: Howard Bullock Tall, wiry, glasses. Cold, heartless, everything done by the book. Keeping peace in this area has never been easy since the NERCC was founded. Sea/Tac is a special kind of headache. Peterson and Roderick are hand-picked professionals, but fight like cats & dogs.

Sea/Tac Metro Administrator: Grover M. Peterson. An attractive man in his early 40's, Peterson is extremely dangerous. Former Marine, then commander in the Secret Service Black Operations Division, he stays fit and combat ready. Often going on operations himself, he takes the job of keeping 4.7 million citizens in line very seriously. Peterson dislikes drugs, and seldom drinks. Of course he also has a definite rivalry with Roderick.

Washington State Administrator: Miles "Chainsaw" Roderick Just turned 50; Roderick doesn't show it. He's big, (6'4", 260 lbs) and only a little overweight, loves chewing tobacco, beer, chainsaws, and guns. Calm, cool, and laid back, he knows how the average Washingtonians that don't live in the 'plex think. Roderick is often at other NERCC

offices throughout the state, and other police agencies.

NERCC Seattle/Tacoma Metroplex Administrative Organization:

- *Administrator* - Grover Peterson
- *Chief of Operations* - Phillip Tessier (use NERCC Commander Stats)
- *Commander* - North Metro: Lissa Tennison (Commander Stats)
- *Commander* - South Metro: Clarence Aylesworth (Commander Stats)
- *Commander* - NERCC Emergency Response Unit (E.R.U.): Jonathan Stiel (Elite Stats)
    - 48 Sergeants (Veteran Stats)
    - 375 Officers (Enforcers Stats)
    - 150 Recruits (Snot-Nosed Stats)
    - 16 E.R.U. (Elite Stats)

Zones: The Metroplex is generally a high control area, CR 5, as are the military bases. What once was downtown Seattle is now known as the Sea/Tac null zone, walled off by concrete on one side & surrounded by water on the other 3 sides.

NERCC Washington State Administrative Organization

- Administrator - Miles Roderick
- Chief of Operations - Carlos Valenzuela (Cmmdr Stats)
- Commander - Washington District: Derek Slater (Cmmdr Stats)
- Commander - Washington State E.R.U.: Eugene Thomas (Elite Stats)
    - 39 Sergeants (Veterans Stats)
    - 286 Officers (Enforcer Stats)
    - 67 Recruits (Snot-Nosed Stats)
    - 24 E.R.U. (Elite Stats)

Zones: The whole state, theoretically, has a CR of 5, but in the wilderness areas this drops to CR 1 or 2 (CR 0 if nobody knows the area exists). The former city of Olympia is a null zone, with low radioactivity. The city of Richland, and the nearby Hanford Fusion Plant are a well-patrolled CR 5. Notes: Throughout Washington, NERCC patrols regularly travel along the major roads and towns, checking in on local town sheriffs, and responding to serious disturbances, similar to the duties of the state patrol, long ago.

Crime & Criminals of the Metroplex

The Mafia: The DeStefano family coldly and efficiently runs 'family business'in the metroplex. On the east side, the 'Stevens' family is well known & well respected in the business world, a local real estate baron, and dilettante. Born in 1997, as Frederick Jason DeStefano, now known as Jay Stevens, married twice and now divorced. Jay floats about the upper crust, running business, secure in his alliance with Pro-Gov, through his niece, now the Governor of Washington State. Numbers-wise, the family has the biggest organization in the 'plex, and the largest income. DeStefano's mob has a running feud with the Jigoku clan, and often clashes with the Flaming Skull Society.

The 'Traffs: Not really concerned with a locale so cold & wet, and far from home. Drug dealers and suppliers are, of course, in the area, but a major turf war is not worth the effort.

The Triads: The Flaming Skull Society ranks third in the organized crime syndicates of the Sea/Tac Metroplex, but in the neighborhoods they control, they get the respect deserved. Many of the members are heavily cybered, and all are well-trained (14+) in martial arts.

The Russki-Yak: As one of the biggest Pacific port cities, Clan Jigoku has been well-ensconced for a long time, and the feud with the mafia goes back just as far. Clan Jigoku (meaning *clan of the underworld*) is controlled by 8 Shukenja (Wizards) who keep their identities and meetings a closely guarded secret. Whether or not any or all of them

have mystic powers is not known. Clan personnel and soldiers are loyal unto death, and Jigoku ninja are feared and respected throughout the Pacific Rim. Currently, plans for the metroplex include continuing black market trade in electronics & technology between the eastern countries and the U.S., and opening normal trade routes as well. The clan has arranged bodyguards & security for Mayor Terrence without his knowledge.

Local Gangs

The Grungers: A null-zone gang typically known for head bashing and scare tactics. 19 members, favoring hand to hand weaponry, and armored vests under their ragged, smelly clothing. Typical vehicles are old beater cars, and some motorcycles.

Terminators: An east side cycle gang, known for expensive, flashy bikes and cyberwear. They are loud and violent, with nice, new weaponry, and some amount of real skill. All have well-connected parents.

Rackets in the Metroplex Bloodsports: Most bloodsports except the ICF and UTBC events are illegal. Other matches are sometimes fought in the ruins of the old King Dome, in the null zone. Sometimes intrepid independent reporters cover these events.

Body Banks: The Stevens' Foundation (DeStefano family) fronts a free clinic in the null zone, and another on the east side. A few other street doc/chop shops are around if you look hard enough.

Drugs: Almost all of the organized crime groups are involved in the manufacture and/or resale of drugs. In the null zone, and in the tree covered wilderness of Washington, many labs and farms operate. Don't forget, many young college students specialize in agriculture, and not just in regular farm crops.

Gambling: Legal in Washington state, as long as you get the licenses, pay your taxes, etc.. For this reason, back room card games and casinos still abound.

Prostitution: Still illegal, technically, but nobody wants to devote any resources to putting them through the system, so most officers just issue $50 tickets now and then and order medical checkups.

Going to Court and Doing Time in the Metroplex

The 'plex has several courthouses, the result of meshing several communities together. These smaller courts handle simple cases, referring more important cases to the Sea/Tac High Court, located in the north end of the metroplex. Most trials do not require any jury; some require jurors present in person; and others operate with the jury watching and voting over interactive thriddie. Still others go to the show "You be the Judge" where the viewing audience chooses a verdict from multiple choice. Of course, a lot of 'subversive elements' never get a trial. Hmmm, funny how that happens.

Local & State Prisons

Maximum Security - Walla Walla State Penitentiary: Standing in the desert of S.E. Washington, where winter temps are sub-zero, and summer, 100 degrees plus. This lockdown is the toughest in the state, as inmates are implanted with a device similar to the Omerta implant, except the psych is programmed for pacifism. The surgery takes place in the 'plex, after sentencing, programmed and controlled by the Department of Corrections security computers. The explosives are programmed to explode when 100 meters away from a security checkpoint buoy, on the penitentiary perimeter and in prisoner transport vehicles, or by remote detonation command sent from the warden's computer.

Medium Security - Monroe Penal Facility: Prisoner rehabilitation and job skill training.

Metroplex Jail: Near the High Court stands a huge building of dark grayish-black plasticrete. Inside are thousands of

the plex's criminals, awaiting trials or sentencing. Since most have not been sentenced, implants are not an option here. Known as a violent and dangerous place, guards are not afraid to use force, most armed with stun sticks and armored in monocrys suits.

Other possible sentencing areas:

- *Washington State Reformatory Farms:* Located throughout the state, minimum security.
- *U.S. Health Dept. Convict-Subject Penal Research Programs:* Several laboratories throughout the state participate in this program.
- *Washington State Toxic Waste Division:* Cleanup crews are needed for the Hanford Nuclear Waste Dump in eastern Washington, and also parts of Puget Sound, where toxic spills and dumping has occurred.
- *House Arrest, Pending Involuntary Organ Donation:* The criminal is put on house arrest, until someone needs his flesh. (see "the body banks" p.CW79)

Rehab, House Arrest, Community Service, and Fines are also common.

Culture and Seattle Style Art & Music

For decades Seattle artists have been on the cutting edge of art, literature, music, and video. In the one-and-twenty, Sea/Tac still is. All over the 'plex, VR parlors, 360 Holo-Theaters, broadway & dance theaters are open all day for citizens enjoyment. For those preferring the music scene, small clubs dot the sprawl, larger concert halls as well, and for really big concerts, the King Dome & Tacoma Dome are available. Rumor has it that Cassilda's Dance is scheduling a stop in Sea/Tac on their next tour.

Sports: With just as much enthusiasm as the music fans, Sea/Tac sports fans love sports of all kinds. The King & Tacoma Domes are the usual locations for football, baseball, basketball, soccer, etc.. The ICF and UTBC are also licensed to hold bloodsport events in the Domes.

News: There's always something happening in the metroplex. Local stations 4, 5, 7, and 11 usually get the Sea/Tac and Washington news first. Station reporters drive station vehicles and operate legit. Freelancers, however, often drive unmarked vehicles and carry a variety of ID's and costumes (Police, Fire, Dr., etc.) to get them in where the action is happening, so that they can send it off to the brokers. Anything going on in the null zone is handled by freelancers, Korp newsteams don't get paid enough to get themselves killed.

Fashion: High-C's on the east side tend toward the Bimbo or Barbie look, with some occasionally wearing the S/M Leather & Latex look for shock value. Middle class favors work uniforms and business suits, or the Prole style, in the off hours. A large portion of the citizens go for the Techno, probably due to the amount of tech and tech jobs in the metroplex.

Technology in the Metroplex

Several factors have contributed to the huge tech base in Seattle-Tacoma. First and foremost is the number of good universities, pumping out well-educated young technicians. Second is the California Exodus of the late twentieth. The third is NATComp, the result of the U.S. government's forced merger of several businesses, including a major leader in software, and a SOTA CPU company. Fusion Power is the staple of the northwest, with a plant in central Washington, near the old Hanford Nuclear Plant, and another on the south end of Whidbey Island, across from Sea/Tac in Puget Sound. It is heavily patrolled, and a Naval Air Station is on the north end of Whidbey Island, about 20 miles away. Rumors are everywhere concerning tech, hardware and software, such as the University of Washington having successes with RTSC's, or that Boeing Aerospace has developed or is developing an interplanetary space plane.

Getting Tech'd in the 'Plex

So you want to by a cyborg when you grow up? Best place to look is in the null zone, where just about anything can be had for a price, and nobody asks questions, if you live to tell about it. Of course, if price is no object, and you have the connections, east side doctors have the best in nanotools and scary-clean surgical facilities. Because of the high-tech region, Uncommon tech is Common, and Rare is Uncommon. Very Rare and Experimental remain the same. However, because so much is black market, any piece purchased is extremely likely to have a glitch or two.

The Net, Sea/Tac

Due to the availability of NATComp defensive software, often bundled in with office suite software, many Sea-Tac systems are well-defended. Also, it is a growing trend among Korp computer management to turn into net-heads.

I hope that tells you what you need to know. Sea-Tac is not a place out in the wilderness. Lots of Tech, and lots of attitude. Take care or end up dead.

By Terry Pratchett and Phil Masters

Art by Paul Kidby

The Orders

There have always been Orders at Unseen University, but their names and locations have changed over the centuries. The exception is Mrs. Widgery's Lodgers, which is as old as the University itself; originally, the Tower of Art was too small to hold all students, some of whom boarded with Mrs Widgery, whose house stood where New Hall does today.

Unseen University currently contains eight Orders:

- The Ancient and Truly Original Sages of the Unbroken Circle
- The Hoodwinkers
- Mrs. Widgery's Lodgers
- The Ancient and Truly Original Brothers of the Silver Star
- The Venerable Council of Seers
- The Sages of the Unknown Shadow
- The Order of Midnight
- The Last Order (also known as The Other Order)

[Note: these are not disciplinary colleges as American universities have a College of Medicine, College of Law, College of Large Athletic Scholarships, et cetera. In American terms, they are a little like fraternity houses, but much more formal, with a hierarchy of membership extending to the top of the faculty.]

University Servants

UU could not be run without a lot of patient, underpaid employees behind the scenes. Naive visitors might ask why the wizards could not use magic to meet their every want, but no-one with a modicum of experience of Disc magic would raise the question.

For one thing, it takes care and effort, whereas a competent servant manages himself. For another, magic has at least latent consciousness; an enchanted cooking-pot that perpetually had to produce high quality soup might, at best, raise objections to its state, and might at worst start experimenting with *nouvelle cuisine*. And for a third, even the most routine magic carries a tiny but significant risk of Going Wrong -- a risk that should only be run for very good reasons (such as "I felt like it"). Work as servants in such an environment carries a small but measurable risk, of course. However, it does provide one way in which female characters might get inside the University without attracting attention.

The Bledlows

The University police force are known as the Bledlows (the origin of the name is unknown). They tend to be heavyset and elderly, but quick ("spry" is a term sometimes used) and assertive; they are mostly ex-soldiers or Watchmen. They have a universal confidence that all the students are guilty of something. Most of the time, their main task is to act as

porters. However, they do act as repositories of UU lore -- that is, connected with the university as an historical place of learning, rather than as a magical nexus -- and spend a lot of their time observing pointless (but possibly once useful) rituals, such as the Ceremony Of The Keys and the Search Of The Laundry.

Note: The Archchancellor is an Autocondimentor, that is, a person who seasons his food before tasting it. For most people with this habit, it means a bit of salt, maybe pepper, before they take a bite. In Ridcully's case, it includes doses of everything on the table, and anything the waiter can be persuaded to bring from the pantry. This level of Autocondimenting can earn a -3 reaction from anyone professionally involved with food preparation, and a -5 from anyone fancying himself a gourmet. Whether they will openly express their reaction in the presence of the Archchancellor is another matter. Incidentally, a possible assassin may wonder if Ridcully ever tests the salt before sprinkling it . . .

Pointed Hats

Contrary to widespread belief, pointed hats are not actually necessary for Disc magic. The fact that wizards insist on wearing vast and spectacular concoctions out of vanity, many witches find that proper witches' hats ensure that they are recognised and treated with respect, and wizardly evil viziers often insist on installing pointed centre-sections to their turbans, is just one of those cultural things. Really. There have been two noteworthy Hats mentioned in the Chronicles as belonging to the Archchancellor of Unseen University. The first had been worn, as a badge of office, by countless generations of office-holders. As a result, it had absorbed much of their personalities (not likeable) and powers (immense). It could talk, and could grant even Rincewind a small degree of magical power; on the head of a potentially competent but untrained magic-worker, it took over and made the wearer the most formidable wizard on the Disc. As the supreme symbol of wizardry, it led one strand in the resistance to the rise of Coin the Sourcerer (see ***Sourcery***). It was fairly certainly totally destroyed during its wearer's defeat; even the wizards of Unseen University think it politic not to investigate further. The second hat, belonging to the present Archchancellor, does not appear to be magical at all; it is a work of engineering genius. It has telescopic legs and hidden oiled silk roller blinds that enable it to transform into a tent, a bottle of brandy under the tip (which unscrews to become a cup), a pistol crossbow in the hatband, and internal compartments for emergency rations and a miniature spirit stove. It is decorated with fishing flies.

Allied Magical Trades

They aren't often seen in the chronicles, but of course, there has to be a class of "support staff" for all those hard-working wizards who find themselves too busy to travel far from their laboratories, libraries, and dining-halls, and too dignified to wash out their own alembics, let alone to go digging up grubby roots by moonlight.

Magicians

Magicians are mostly failed students of magic -- Unseen University drop-outs and such -- who perform basic lab-tech functions for wizards, as they prefer to stay on the fringes of the thaumaturgical world rather than leave it altogether. (Note; the term is sometimes used as a synonym for "wizard," but that is a potentially dangerous mistake. A wizard might turn a person into a deckchair for making it, while a magician might look extremely hurt and refrain from buying that person any more drinks, ever again.)

Thaumaturgists

Thaumaturgists are a step down even from Magicians, as they lack any formal magical training; their job is to go out and fetch ingredients. This doesn't mean shopping; it means grave-robbing, molesting small (and not-so-small) animals, and a lot of earplugs, running away, and inventing bizarre excuses.

Conjurers

Conjurers are not really magic-workers at all, but tubby, smiling fellows with coats stuffed full of half-smothered doves and decks of cards from which you will be asked to choose one, any one, unless you are very swift on your feet. They are usually accompanied by thin women in spangly outfits who don't speak much but point at things with considerable grace, and react nervously in the presence of large boxes and saws.

Real wizards hold conjurers in the utmost contempt, made worse by the fact that the conjurers don't seem to understand that they're a joke, and almost intolerable because they insist on treating wizards like pals, or even colleagues.

While conjuring isn't really a profession -- most of them make their actual living doing something else -- they have a Guild, with a small guildhall in Ankh-Morpork. A practising Conjuror (and they never seem to not be practising) receives a -2 reaction from all Wizards[1] and a -1 from anyone who has seen too many card tricks or has trouble around rabbits.

1: The only likely exception that comes to mind would be Rincewind, who is unlikely to make much fuss over qualifications.

The Thaum

The sort of wizards who believe in measuring everything usually use a unit of magic called the*Thaum.* This is defined as the amount of power necessary to (semi-permanently) create one small white pigeon or three standard billiard balls. Academic wizards recognise smaller divisions (millithaums), but these are not of direct importance to practical spell-casting.

Another unit of measurement exists, the *Prime* (named for its inventor, Augustus Prime). The Prime equals the amount of magic required to move one pound of lead one foot, with subdivisions into milli-, micro-, and nanoprimes. This was an attempt to put magical measurement on a rational scientific basis. It never caught on. For atmospheric purposes, the GM may declare that a thaum is equal to one ***GURPS*** energy/Fatigue point, and require PC mages to use this terminology.

The Thaumometer

Ambient magical energy can be measured with a thaumometer, a dark blue glass tube with a dial on the front and a button on the side. It is useful for determining when one is in an area of high residual magic (a Very High Mana zone). This device seems to be a relatively new invention, and is probably only available at Unseen University (and perhaps on the Counterweight Continent); a suggested price to PCs is $250.

Room 3B

Unseen University's "Room 3B" does not exist, but for once, there is nothing darkly metaphysical about this unreality. The simple fact is that some lectures and so on are on the timetable, but no teacher or student wants anything to do with them. These lectures are always scheduled for Room 3B. Sometimes the entire teaching staff is in there at once. However, an established Discworld fact is that if enough people believe in a thing . . .

Magic Circles

Summoning spells, including some whose primary purpose is to obtain information, often involve the scribing of magic circles and Octograms. These mostly serve as conductors for secondary spells which keep the summonsed entity in

place (if the caster is lucky). (A quite separate phenomenon is the periodic supernatural effect whereby circles of flattened plants appear in rural cornfields, and sometimes in other crops and people's breakfast cereals. This is widely recognised by magical theorists as a sign that dimensional barriers are weakening slightly; relatively few people, mostly older witches, know that it indicates a serious danger, because it gives elves -- see p.DW171 -- a chance of access.)

By: Matthew D. Grau

Art by Lance S. Winkel

Recently, I played in a Cyberpunk 2020 campaign as a Netrunner. My character was a wiz-kid hacker named Cat, and I spent a lot of time coming up with new programs to create and use, some useful and some childish. I'd like to share a few of them.

Anti-System Programs

Catburglar 1200 eb
Class: Anti-System
Strength: 6 MU: 6

Catburglar is more than just a virus program. When Catburglar is booted, it locks onto a chosen data line and traces it back to its source. It then begins to erase one program or file per turn until the computer is turned off. It doesn't just erase those files or programs; it transfers them back down the pipe to the user's deck. Worse yet, it doesn't go away when the infected computer is turned off. It sticks around and continues its work until it is destroyed.

ICON: It looks like a photorealistic black panther, with glowing red eyes, that consumes the deck's contents one by one.

Notes: This one was hefty, but it rocks. You're not just erasing someone's files and programs, you're stealing them for yourself. They'd better have a good Killer in memory.

DPW (Disgruntled Postal Worker) 720 eb (cheaper in some circles)
Class: Anti-System
Strength: 5 MU: 3

DPW is a vicious e-mail bomb. Not only does it immediately crash and erase a target's e-mail, it Auto Re-Rezzes on a 5 or 6 on 1d6 and keeps doing it until DPW is utterly destroyed.

ICON: A cartoony postal worker with lots of dynamite sticks. It laughs a lot.

Notes: Yes, it took a long time to program and it is expensive. It was a small price to pay for the smiting of one's enemies. I used it a lot.

Mail Tap 750 eb
Class: Anti-System
Strength: 5 MU: 3

When Mail Tap is attached to a modem origin, it recognizes all incoming and outgoing e-mail and immediately copies it to the program's user. Although it is an Anti-System program, it really does not attack the deck but only leeches off the e-mail function. It is invisible and difficult to detect due to its passivity.

Notes: I made this one an Anti-System program because I had no idea what else to make it. It's really handy if you

can get your hands on it.

Evasion/Stealth Programs

Ding-Dong-Ditch 500 eb
Class: Evasion/Stealth
Strength: 5 MU: 3

Ding-Dong-Ditch is designed to fool modem traces of all kinds. Essentially, it creates a false trail leading to someone else's modem origin. It is very passive software, and it is not likely to alarm anyone using a trace.

ICON: It creates a fractally realistic icon, simply patching your data trail back to another origin. It looks like normal net architecture.

Notes: I got sick of phone traces, Flatlines, and Watchdog series programs, and decided that I needed something passive that I could simply boot and forget. This has done the trick. It's great when a Poison Flatline ends up in someone's else deck. It's not a sure thing, but then again what is?

Nine-Lives 800 eb
Class: Stealth/Evasion
Strength: 5 MU: 6

Nine-Lives is a program for those who enjoy leaving their meat bodies intact when running dangerous grids. Nine-Lives follows you around through the net and detects Black-IC (those which will harm your meat) within the same node. Once Black-IC has been detected, Nine-Lives immediately logs you out. It is fast, adding +2 to your deck speed for its use.

ICON: The 'runners net icon gains a feline feature, such as cat's eyes, a tail, etc.

Notes: This was one for the paranoid, who didn't want to end up dead or a vegetable when hacking serious grids. Yes, it's a memory hog, but once you know the IC is there you can prepare for it in case you weren't properly prepared in the first place. I'd rather be back at square one and disoriented than dead or brainfried.

Utility Programs

No Peeking 180 eb
Class: Utility
Strength: 5 MU: 2

No Peeking detects taps on your deck's data line, including such programs as Mail Tap.

Notes: I designed this one thinking that if I designed Mail Tap, someone else had had a similar idea.

Stitcher 250 eb
Class: Utility
Strength: 7 MU: 3

Stitcher is a program designed to restore damaged files. Better yet, it stays active in the system and Auto Re-Rezzes on a 5 or 6 on 1d6. That way, it sweeps up after a virus, etc., thst is still running around your deck while you try to purge it. It's expensive for a utility and kind of a memory hog, but it is well worth it.

Notes: I wanted something more powerful than Re-Rezz. I created this one after Cat's deck got fried and I lost some really cool data. Yes, I forgot to back it up. Oops.

Behind Death's Veil: The Servants of Morr

in Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay

By Chris Clements

Art by Clifford VanMeter

Morr's mortal servants are dedicated somber individuals, completing a multitude of distasteful tasks which most others are unwilling to do. They also stand as the last bastion against chaos, entering the battle only to turn the tide of a hopeless situation, bringing with them the might of Morr himself.

Within Morr's church are different sects, representing the different aspects of their god. Those who are clerics have the option of undergoing rituals of change inkeeping with their sect. Below is a detailed list of the varying sects and rituals.

(Note - only about 40% of Morr's clerics follow a sect, most use the basic cleric outlined under Morr's strictures in **Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay***)*

Sihad-ri

Sometimes a cleric of Morr feels the need to distance themselves from the living to become closer to their god. To achieve this, they give up all worldly items, contact their friends and relatives one last time and then set up a funeral - for themselves! Afterwards, they must make dramatic changes: take the name of a fallen cleric of old, alter their appearance (usually by wearing a mask or through ritual scarring), adopt a new set of friends and allies, and move on to a new town or city. This is not the same as a new *life*, exactly, as the priest is dead in the eyes of others (including his new friends) and may not interact the same way with people as he once did. The Sihad-ri are unconcerned with material items, casual conversation and similar mortal concerns. Most people ignore the cleric, responding only when directly addressed. However, those of Morr may expect certain favors from nearly any mortal: shelter, food, water, and ordinary information, without payment of any kind.

In return for these perks, the cleric searches for those close to dying, easing their passing into the other side. These servants of Morr are greatly feared, as they are seen as the harbingers of the end. Yet, none are more comforting than the Sihad-ri to those in their final moments; those that choose this path are among Morr's most empathetic and caring clerics. Other duties include administering the last rites to those who will be executed, reporting any necromantic activities (many choose to confront the heretic directly) and the recording of every death witnessed.

Friends of the priest are in a strange position; on one hand they are the only true link that the Sihad-ri has for true human warmth, and yet viewed as oddities because they are friends to an agent of death (they won't be looked down on; they just draw curious glances). The cleric's friends also enact Morr's will by helping with his or her duties ("Hey Dethilius, I heard someone in the tavern is dying of the plague..."). While the faithful attendant of death may have certain privileges, these may or may not be extended to include their friends. The companions must also stare death in the face daily, a morbid reminder of mortality. Add to this some frightening enemies . . .

Mortal and undead creatures that cause fear and terror do not sway the Sihad-ri. What do the dead need to fear from these beasts? This immunity to fear does not apply to creatures beyond mortal death (i.e. daemons, elemental beings, etc). This is a big advantage, however, to the loyal cleric, earning them much respect among warriors (like the dwarven

slayer cults who find it comforting that their fearlessness is rubbing off on a few humans; giving them great respect for the Sihad-ri and tolerating no insults to them in their presence).

The clerics of Morr who enter the Sihad-ri are rarely accosted and have little worth stealing (at least to others). Much of their life is spent overseeing the rites of beyond. When they finally succomb to death, their body is taken to the initiation site of the Sihad-ri and buried next to the first tomb dedicated to them.

Roleplaying Notes

The Sihad-ri make for interesting NPC encounters as well as challenging PCs. They are cryptic and normally talk no louder than a whisper; they are eerie company.

Social Status - nil. No modifiers apply, for death visits beggars and kings. This means the Sihad-ri is treated as an equal (when relating to their job) and gain no bonuses or minuses.

Skills that a cleric of a Sihad-ri sect may choose from at each level: Arcane Language - Necromantic, Herb Lore and Lip Reading (for those too weak to speak in their final moments).

Bonus Powers - Complete immunity to fear and terror caused by a mortal or undead creatures.

Hindrances - Sihad-ri have stage 1 cadaverous appearance (it won't go past stage 1).

Velcin

The Velcin are the guardians of the realms of death and dreams, ensuring that neither suffer abuse. Their opponents are the undead, necromantic mages, illusionists who would tamper with dreams and those who worship the evil assassin lord Khaine. They also have limited access to Illusion spells; to bring the reality of dreams alive while those who view them are awake.

Instead of wearing the standard black robes of the other clerics, the Velcin adorn themselves with dark blue trimmed in white, which helps identify them to the public. The sight of one of these faithful is welcome throughout the Old World; children plead with them to convince Morr to send them pleasant dreams while the adults gain peace of mind knowing that they are around. They represent to the commoners a lighter, gentler side of a brooding god. The Velcin are often thought of as very kind, as part of their duties is to help the those who have lost a loved one to carry on with life. This speeds up the mourning process and assures the individual that the deceased is in a better place.

Although the Velcin are not very militant, they have gained a reputation for steadfastness when confronting their enemies (usually through magic). Most of the other sect members back them up in a confrontation. Their style of fighting emphasises guile, not brute force. They prefer to plague the victim from afar with spells and let others handle hand-to-hand.

Yet another of their duties is easing those troubled in their sleep. Such problems may be caused by nightmares, a haunting of a spirit or daemon, or too much sugar before bed. The Velcin help diagnose these problems and help direct the individual to a cure.

Lastly, Velcin harbor a grudge against those illusionists who follow Ranald. This is clearly a slap in the face, and they react angrily to such pretenders. While this does not mean combat (normally), it can lead to both parties trying to hinder the plans of the other.

Roleplaying Notes

Velcin are well liked and respected. Unlike other servants of Morr, they are viewed with less inhibition and are able to gain the trust of others more easily.

Social Status - (c/l) B 5d4+2

Skills available to Velcin through Morr are: Arcane Language - Necromantic, Arcane Language - Illusionist and Hypnotize.

Spells - Velcin may choose any necromantic spells and may take up to two illusionist spells each level.

Ylasu

Ylasu are the hunters of Morr, working as his weapon against his enemies. They are easily the most martial of Morr's sects, and eagerly engage those that defy Morr's will. The Ylasu often have a warrior background, making them more than capable of handling melee combat. This often surprises their foes, who think of the majority of Morr's clerics as non-combatants. With their tendency towards warfare, Ylasu tend to concentrate on spells that are useful in combat, making them a double threat to those who would ignore Morr's teachings.

The Ylasu are the clerics that adventurers often deal with when they report of necromancy or cults of Khaine to the temples of Morr. Ylasu are also the most common sect encountered outside of the towns and cities of the Old World, seeking those who create unlife without Morr's permission. The Ylasu themselves, unbeknowenst to many, have Morr's blessing to create undead at will (while other clerics may also do so, they must petition their god). Ylasu do not abuse this blessing, but don't hesitate when the situation demands it. The Ylasu keep their special permission a secret of the sect, speaking of it only to trusted family, and typically only casting these spells outside, far away from people. Ylasu typically destroy the undead once its task is done (no roll needed; they crumble to dust at the whim of their creators). To become casual or sloppy with this blessing would to call down the wrath of Morr. Good judgment is essential.

The Ylasu often follow later in life the career of witch hunter and demagogue. Witch Hunting comes naturally to them; they have hunted many foul humans in their time, mostly those depraved enough to turn to the dark arts of necromancy. The career of demagogue appeals to those clerics who wish to find allies against their undead foes, and to help turn public opinion of those who are too well protected to take direct action toward.

Roleplaying Notes

The Ylasu are highly disciplined warriors and the world knows it. They are not arrogant about this, but they demand proper respect. It is unwise to insult an Ylasu if you value your place in the afterlife.

It is suggested but not required that an Ylasu to have completed one warrior career before entering this sect.

Social Status - (c/l) B 2d4

Skills that can be taken from Morr are: Arcane Language - Necromantic, Specialist Weapon Polearms (Scythe), Strike Mighty Blow and Strike to Stun.

Puqoru

The Puqoru are the prophets of Morr, and the smallest of Morr's sects. These men and women are blessed (or cursed, depending on how you look at it) with foresight, diligently recording the future they see. Books are compiled of the greatest of these, often found in the temples of other gods allied with Morr.

Gifts such as this do not come without a cost. All Puqoru have lost something for the visions they see; one may be blind, another may be haunted with nightmares of his death he knows is coming. Another may be filled with dark prophecies - envisioning the end when chaos triumphs. The Puqoru, as a result, tend to be fairly eccentric, and they are vilified by most superstitious peasants. Ironically, they can often be found attached to nobles and courts, serving them as advisors and warning them of the possible futures they see.

The future is not set (chaos makes sure of this), but possible outcomes can be divined. The Puqoru are experts at discovering these tangents, and extrapolating other tangents to come. Their minds can wander the *possibilities* of the future without getting lost. Puqoru who achieve levels of 3 or 4 in the cleric scheme are known to answer questions before they are put to them, which can be very disconcerting.

Puqoru are in no way obligated to tell others of the visions they receive. Nor are they expected to explain what those visions mean. They can, but often prefer not to, fearing to tamper with the future. Dire events about to happen that effect the well being of a large population will always be reported in the hopes of averting danger, or at least saving lives. The lower classes view the Puqoru as the bearers of bad news and dread their prophecy.

Roleplaying Notes

The Puqoru understand what can not be understood. They see things differently than normal people, and they are both sought out and feared by the public.

Choose one minor (or major) physical impairment, one insanity or some drawback as a result of the 'gift'.

Social Status - (c/l) B 4d4 * - dealing with a lower social class invokes a -10 test to Fellowship for each letter below B.

Skills available to Puqoru are: Arcane Language - Necromantic, Divining (another form), Cryptography, Palmistry and Identify Magical Artifact.

Other Groups

Knights of the Raven

Also called Knights of the Silver or Black Raven

The Knights of the Raven were a small group of templars who had dedicated their lives to Morr. They were never great in number, and the order has disappeared in modern times. Their role in history, however, is pivotal and not all of these knights have completely vanished from the Old World. The order of the raven were renowned for their timing, often arriving in the instant needed to turn the tide of the battle (almost always against chaos). Sadly, the order was all but destroyed over two hundred years ago in a desperate last stand versus the chaos incursion. The surviving knights had no time to rest, as a cruel dragon by the name of Mire threatened the entire countryside. Against Mire these brave knights fell, but not before seriously wounding the beast and driving it off.

The order would have been left only to history but for a dozen knights that did not die. Morr slowed their functions to almost nothing and revived them. Each was given the choice to continue to serve him better than before or take the gift of eternal sleep. All chose to stay within the world and fulfill Morr's will. These knights are not undead, they are very slowly dying, kept suspended in their final moments by the will of Morr. All bear unhealed wounds caused by their last battle with the dragon. These knights are scattered all over the Old World, half of them sleeping within the earth until they are needed. Clerics of Morr refer to these dozen knights as the Faded.

The general populace is not aware of their existence, but many tales of a lone strange knight bearing the symbol of a raven are spoken of in villages and towns. Perhaps Morr's followers will decide it is time once again to revive the order of the raven, causing them to seek out one of these beings for approval and training.

Roleplaying Notes

The Faded themselves are best left as NPC plot devices, rather than as PCs. However, it is possible for the order to be revived by the church of Morr, enabling a PC to join the Knights in a more traditional, mortal capacity. How this new order will be viewed by the public is up to its new members.

Career Entries: (same as Templar)

Career Exits: (same as Templar)

Normal Templar Advance Scheme.

Skills - All listed under Templar plus: Identify Undead, Specialist Weapon - Lance, and Specialist Weapon - Two Handed.

Faded Knights of the Raven

For wounds subtract d4 and then double what remains.

Powers

Meld with earth: Sink into any natural patch of the earth, and move slowly - 1/2 their normal cautious Move.

Open the veil: Pull the cloak of Morr back, up to an area of 10 feet by 10 feet and cause one automatic wound to the living; may kill a person automatically *if they want to die* -some servants of chaos wish this very much!

Raven Familiar: The engraved image of a raven on the knight's armor can animate. The raven can go ethereal and move up to ten miles away from the knight; the templar sees everything the raven sees.

Magic Weapon: (each knight has one unique magic weapon)

Morr Among The Other Races

Morr is known by many names to the races of the Old World, and he has followers among them as well.

Dwarves

They call Morr by the name Gazul, Lord of the Underearth. They have a small number of clerics who oversee the construction of burial tombs and placement of traps as well as preparing the dead to be entombed.

For a dwarf to become a cleric of Gazul they must have completed the career Artisan-Stonemason or Engineer. They have the normal skills and spells available to clerics of Morr.

Elves

Among the elves Morr is known as Sarriel, granter of the ability to enter a trance similar to sleep, and also Bran Wa Shin which erases selected memories (see pg.54 of ***Apocrypha Now***). His is also said to guide the spirits of animals to an elf beast-friend, showing them their totem animal (Karnos is still their chosen god, but they also give respect to Morr in this aspect). He is known to help protect their domains by the protective illusions his clerics weave.

An elf cleric of Sarriel needs no other prior experience in other careers. The skills they are able to choose from in addition to their cleric advance scheme are: Divining, Hypnotize and Arcane Language - Illusionist. They have access to Illusionist spells.

New Spell (Illusionist Spell Level 2): *Enter the Dreaming*

Magic Points: 4 + 1 per additional round

Range: Touch

Duration: 1 turn

Ingredients: Silk Sleeping Mask

Users: Velcin and Elven Clerics of Sarriel

This spell allows the caster to view and interact in the target's dreams. The target is allowed a WP test to resist if this is desired. The caster views what the target is dreaming about and may be able to draw certain conclusions from the images viewed. Also, the caster may make an INT test to detect if any other entities are residing within the targets dream or mind (daemonic possession, lycanthropy, etc.).

Note that the word 'dream' includes nightmares and trances. This spell has no effect on a target that is not asleep.

Roleplaying Ideas

Sihad-ri: A necromancer boldly decides to hide in public view and disguises himself as a Sihad-ri, taking advantage of the sect's tendency to be both respected and ignored. The PCs stumble across the evil wizard and see through his ruse, but convincing others can be more difficult . .

Ylasu: The PCs are hired by the church of Morr to find a missing cleric who is of the Ylasu sect. Following the trail, the characters find her in the clutches of Khainite cultists, who plan to sacrifice her in a diabolical plan to bring their evil god's blessing.

Velcin: One PC is tormented with supernatural nightmares. Whatever the cause of these visions, the characters must find a Velcin to help rid him or her of them quickly, or face losing their sanity. (Great way to lead to an adventure; "You must defeat Drachenfels if you wish to sleep again!")

Puqoru: A Puqoru seeks the PCs to deliver a divination concerning them and their next adventure. A warning or an assurance?

Knights of the Raven: The PCs hear rumors of an unusual knight in town (a Faded Knight) who is asking about all travellers in the area. He is searching for a rumored necromancer. The scared necromancer (who claims to be a wizard) hires the pcs to defend him from the 'evil' knight.

by Terry Prachett and Phil Masters

Art by Paul Kidby

Other Old Magical Equipment

Contrary to some beliefs, aside from staffs, most wizardly appurtenances and witches' tools do *not* absorb significant magic; perhaps a few shed octarine sparks or develop a tendency to mutter to themselves at stressful moments, but nothing more. The whole point of ***Discworld*** spells is that they *control* magic, and stop it from seeping too far. The old Archchancellors' Hat was a special, very old, case; few wizards' hats are worn on more than one head. Wizards are very possessive of their hats, and are often buried in them, usually when they are dead.

Authentic royal crowns can be a little unnerving for characters with psychic sensitivity; they tend to *remember* the lives and experiences of their past wearers, which inevitably include a fair amount of blood and fire. Wearing one, especially if not entitled to it, is not recommended for magical adepts.

Memorised Spells

Magic on the Disc works similarly to how most ***GURPS*** players expect it to work - if you know a spell, you know it and that's that. However, GMs wishing to parody that Certain Other GameTM may prefer to try the following **optional** rule that reflects the way magic was described in the earliest of the chronicles; note that it restricts wizards fairly severely.

Optional Memorisation Rule: ***Discworld*** spells may be read directly from a book, or memorised for portability. Characters may memorise a number of spells equal to their IQ + Magery + levels of Eidetic Memory. (Optionally, Very Hard spells can use two "slots," and extremely complex spells can take up more room at the GM's discretion.) Once memorised, the spell stays in the caster's head until it is used, after which that memory space becomes available again. Characters may memorise the same spell more than once at a time.

Reading a spell into memory takes five minutes per point of space required; wizards working in haste may attempt a Will roll, and deduct 10% from the time for every point by which it is made (to a minimum of one minute per space point), but on a failure they add 20% to the time, and on a critical failure, they get a splitting headache for 1D hours, in which time they cannot use any magic, and make all other rolls at -5.
In this system, learning a spell (and paying character points for it) represents the process of wrestling it into your personal grimoire. A skill roll is not required on casting, but the memorised spell is not self-energising; normal energy costs must be met, and skill level *does* modify those. Casting an otherwise-unknown spell from another wizard's grimoire requires a roll against Thaumatology skill at -5, or -10 for Very Hard spells, *and* costs full energy. (Alternatively, memorised spells may have no energy cost, but require skill rolls to cast; casting from a strange grimoire would still work as above).

When a wizard dies, all his currently memorised spells are cast at once, using the remnants of his life energy and draining his staff and any ritual participants he is connected to. The order in which the spells are cast, and their targets, are random (although the GM may intervene for maximum dramatic effect).

Obviously, all this requires fully literate wizards; shamans, witches and such would have to use a different system, which should be balanced to avoid unfairness to wizards. Perhaps they "memorise" spells by puttering about mumbling (for witches), or hitting the mushrooms (for shamans).

An Alternative "Memorisation" Rule

As an alternative optional rule to simulate the behaviour of Disc wizards as sometimes seen, try the following:

Any wizard wishing to use a spell that they have not used in the previous 48 hours must first roll vs. their skill in that spell, with -1 for every point of energy it costs for a minimum casting (the printed cost, unmodified by skill). If this roll fails, they must go back to their spell-books and remind themselves of the technique (taking 3d minutes) before they can cast the spell again.

As a further option, this limitation may be the result of a special disadvantage; "Book-Bound Wizard," worth -5 points, but only available to characters who know at least 15 different spells.

Optional Rule Mechanics

In general, a ***Discworld*** game should be run fast and light on rules; stopping the game every five minutes to check a detailed point of interpretation is likely to kill any humour stone dead. (Except for jokes about GMs who don't know what they are doing, of course).

However, some GMs who run light on rules, and who know that they should be emphasising plot and fun over system, end up with mild cases of megalomania. An RPG, humorous or not, is a co-operative project, and if the GM takes too much power from the players, they will ultimately become frustrated. Everyone should be permitted input.

And don't be afraid of using dice in a ***Discworld*** game, although the results they give can certainly be interpreted freely. The Disc is a place where the random peculiarities of fate are very significant, and risky endeavours genuinely can go right or wrong. Honest use of dice when dice are called for can keep both players and GM on their toes, expecting the unexpected.

Anyway, there are a few optional rules to think about: Hit Locations (p. B109), for example, are good for the "feel" of low-combat games, as they make injuries seem more realistically painful when they do happen. These rules also make non-lethal "knockout" blows slightly easier to accomplish, which is appropriate in ***Discworld*** games; characters in the chronicles are fairly frequently knocked senseless without long-term harm. In fact, combat and injury in the chronicles is realistic and painful enough that many of optional injury and bleeding rules (p. B129-130) are worth considering.

As ***Discworld*** bar-room brawls do only tend to turn lethal when weapons are drawn, and people are quite often knocked out *temporarily* by the traditional cosh to the skull, Stun Damage rules may be very appropriate. (See p.CII151) However, the Disc is a realistic enough setting that only fists, one-handed clubs, and blackjacks are likely to do Stun-only damage. Alternatively, for a quick-and-dirty system, simply assume that all damage done in a fist fight is non-lethal, able to render unconscious but not to kill, and recovered in a few minutes between scenes.

Also, *if* a ***Discworld*** campaign is heavy on combat, the power of narrative on the Disc means that optional Swashbuckling rules (p. CII75-79) are likely to be appropriate. On the other hand, the "comic realism" of the environment should cut in, too; anyone swinging on a chandelier should either look very good and obtain lots of

surprise bonuses, or cause it to collapse and land in the trifle on the dining-table below.

Mood and Pacing

Roleplaying is collaboration. Players and GMs must work together to create an entertainment, and to define a ***mood*** . Perhaps the single most common cause of game failure is a clash of expectations.

This is especially significant in comedy games, and in games set in well-known backgrounds. Even if everyone is expecting a comedy, if the GM is attempting a complex satire, half the players are trying to maximise the slapstick, and the other half are making puns about everything, the campaign is doomed. Similarly, the GM should determine what players want from a ***Discworld*** game; is it to revisit favorite scenes from the novels or to explore areas of the Disc that have mostly been ignored until now? To come up with new characters, or to emulate old favourites? To have adventures, or to have as many laughs as possible?

At least this sort of thing can be sorted out with a little discussion, and provided that there aren't too many distractions, and that everyone is prepared to put in a little work, constructing a mood isn't too difficult. What can be a little harder is *pace* .

Pacing is a skill shared by writers of fiction and good GMs, although the two have to work in slightly different ways. Stories and scenarios can't be played at the same tempo throughout; that would be boring. Equally, clues and key plot events shouldn't just be spaced out one-per-hour or one-per-ten-pages; that would be too predictable. It's better to start slow, and work on a rising rate of events, until the big comic or dramatic climax, then perhaps include a calmer "epilogue" scene. On the other hand, there's a lot to be said for dropping PCs into the middle of some action at the start, to get adrenaline flowing and inhibitions down; such a scene should **not** usually involve major NPCs, and especially not any major villains, especially in RPGs, where too much that's unexpected can happen if the players show unexpected ingenuity (or stupidity) or the dice run amok.
Switches of pace are especially important to comedy, and to many other forms of storytelling. Trying to play every scene at maximum velocity is exhausting and probably hopeless; rather, the GM should keep moving along at a sensible "walking" pace much of the time, then throw jokes or complex slapstick action at the players, ideally when they aren't expecting them. Plots can also involve false climaxes and escalating dramas, with a series of failed attempts to slow the pace before something really special ends the scene. Then, everyone should draw breath before the plot moves on, preferably in an unexpected direction that nonetheless emerges logically from the preceding events. In this sense, comedy is strangely akin to horror.

But GMs shouldn't be too nervous of all this. If in doubt, start with an even-paced, low-key plot, with the best "bits" you can think of evenly spaced throughout, and let the players develop characterisation and some conflict. As with most skills, practice is the best way to learn.

The Rights Of Man

1. Kings are Always Right. Sometimes the statements of kings require a great deal of interpretation, but they are still Right, even if a non-king who made such a statement would be considered stark raving mad.
2. Anyone who lives in a palace, or is wearing clothes that cost more than your village's annual GDP, is Right.
3. Anyone acting on the orders of people in the above classes (soldiers, policemen, tax collectors, etc.) is Usually Right, unless you can prove them Wrong without leaving any witnesses.
4. Scholars, priests, and the people who put up informational signs in public places are Right an unpredictable fraction of the time; discretion is advised.
5. Talking animals, prophecies found in unexpected locations, people who profess to read ancient inscriptions that look to the less initiated like stress fractures, and old women who own more than five cats are all, when they predict great hardships and trouble followed by long life and fabulous wealth, Exactly Half Right.
6. Village idiots, members of religions with less than 25 adherents, and weathered travellers who will gladly accept half of your food in exchange for keeping you awake all night with a story, are Rarely Right, but don't turn your back.

Whence the Turtle?

The idea of the flat world resting on the back of a vast and tolerant animal crops up in any number of ancient myths. Native Americans had a turtle, while Indian myths mention elephants. Other macro-fauna -- bulls, fish, angels, snakes, and so on -- also appear, some of them layered on top of each other.

However, the truth of such ideas is only occasionally relevant to the chronicles. Aside from Krullian research programs, Omnian heresies, and the incidents of ***The Light Fantastic*** , most Discworld stories concern people living life much as most of us understand it. Except for the magic and the gods and so on.

The real point about the turtle is that it shows that this is a fantasy world, where symbolism crosses the line into fact. Character stories and adventures *might* involve research into the nature of Great A'Tuin's biology; they should involve the fantastic.

Still, GMs are entitled to play with the Disc's defining characteristic, if they wish. Going back to those myths; sometimes, part of the animal's function is to get irritated and shift about, generating earthquakes. This might happen on the Disc. There's probably not much that PCs can do about something that could give an itch to Great A'Tuin, but they might at least be able to research it.

Control Ratings

For those who wish to use ***GURPS*** Society Control Ratings (see p. CII188); ***Discworld*** societies cover the whole range, but few survive long as CR 0 anarchies, as neighbours and would-be leaders march in and take over, and few have the organisation and technology required to run at CR 6 (although the Agatean Empire has come close, and Omnian theocracy was truly totalitarian). Ankh-Morpork's *ad hoc* legal system is effectively CR 2, although weak enforcement often makes it look more like CR 1, but it shifts to CR 3 if Captain Carrot is being efficient -- and don't push your luck in the vicinity of the Patrician. Lancre is currently CR 2; under Lady Lilith and the Duc, Genua achieved a truly bizarre version of CR 5 or 6.

Legitimacy and Inheritance

Discworld politics has one element that is slightly different to most of our history; illegitimate offspring frequently inherit power.

This is not quite "legal," but it is widely accepted. To be sure, a legitimate heir will have priority, *if* he or she wants the title -- but especially in the absence of such a claimant, the old king's mistress's child (or whatever) can usually apply for the job. This principle may be pragmatism, it may be sentimentality, but it is certainly widespread, and it has influenced the history of nations including Lancre and Genua in recent years.

Leonard of Quirm
ST 9, **DX** 12, **IQ** 21, **HT** 10
Speed 5.5, Move 5
Dodge 5
Advantages : Reputation (brilliant oddball), +1 among alchemists and artificers in Ankh-Morpork; Status +2; Fully Literate; Gadgeteer (realistic); Inspiration Magnet.
Disadvantages : Unattractive (slightly nerdish); Absent-Minded; Pacifism (Total non-violence); Involuntary Duty (kept locked up by the Patrician); Broad-Minded; Curious.
Quirks : Writes backwards; Doodles in his own margins; Sees everything he does as just a theoretical demonstration of some principle; Wishes the inspirations would leave him alone in his sleep.
Skills : Alchemy (Discworld)-18; Architecture/TL3-19; Armoury/TL4-20; Armoury/TL5 (Sidearms)-20; Armoury/TL5 (Artillery)-19; Armoury/TL6 (Sidearms)-20; Artist-22; Engineer/TL3 (Primitive Machinery)-21; Engineer/TL4 (Clockwork)-20; Engineer/TL5 (Clockwork)-19; Engineer/TL5 (Guns)-20; Engineer/TL6 (Guns)-19; Geology/TL3-21; Mechanic/TL3 (Siege Engines)-20; Mechanic/TL4 (Small Gadgets)-21; Mechanic/TL4 (Wagons)-21;

Mechanic/TL5 (Small Gadgets)-20; Metallurgy/TL3-20; Metallurgy/TL4-19; Meteorology/TL3-19; Naturalist-20; Physics/TL3-20; Physiology/TL3-20; Woodworking-13.
Languages: Ankhian-21; Ancient Tongue-19.

Leonard of Quirm is the Disc's current greatest all-round intellect; an inventive and observational genius who could quite likely cause Ankh-Morpork to jump a ***GURPS*** tech level or two inside a year. Physically, he looks older than he is, at least to a first glance; his head has outgrown its hair covering, and he is slight and looks introverted. He is also, naturally, rather eccentric.

Little is known of his early life, but he certainly came from a family who could afford to have him well educated, despite his tendency to sit staring out of windows, Observing. Eventually, he settled in Ankh-Morpork, where he built quite a name for himself before the Patrician realised how dangerous he was, and had him locked away in a secret cell deep in the palace. Very few people know about this.

It doesn't worry Leonard very much; the cell has plenty of windows, and he is well supplied with artistic materials and components for his experiments. The Patrician has had countless lesser dangers assassinated without a blink, but Leonard is unique, and fascinating. (It is also possible that Leonard could be of use, of course).

The fact is that he understands the mechanical principles of the universe better than any other person on the Disc. However, he "illustrates" them by sketching detailed, functional designs for siege engines, or by creating working TL6 sidearms. Alternatively, he comes up with slightly less deadly concepts, such as flying machines -- or he may spend days inventing sticky yellow memo notes, or creating the finest paintings on the continent. The inspirations leave him with no sense of priorities, and he is naive about human motivations. The Patrician has tried hard to recover and eliminate Leonard's more clever sketches, but he knows that the task is unfinished. Leonard, a total pacifist, apologises profusely whenever another of his intellectual booby-traps goes off.

His inspiration-powered ability to come up with ideas far ahead (or to one side) of his time explains how Leonard has learned skills above the local tech level. Both these TL ratings and Leonard's skills are basically just approximations, in any case; the fact is, if something is physically possible with late-medieval tools (and remember that you can build some very *modern* tools with late medieval tools) it might easily happen on the Disc, and Leonard might well be responsible.

Astrology and Astronomy

Disc-based research into the lights in the sky is still pretty much at a medieval, TL3 sort of level, albeit with plenty of accumulated data. However, the telescope has been invented, and is certainly in widespread use on Krull, so some Disc astronomy might be rated as TL4. It is still very much entangled with astrology; either word can be used for the single skill, although some characters may concentrate on the geometrical, observational bit, and some may think more about star signs and horoscopes.

Part of this, of course, is the fact that, on the Disc, astrology works, very reliably. In this game, it's treated as a version of the Divination spell for convenience, but in truth, this is one of those supernatural techniques that don't require much in the way of thaumic aptitude -- just time and the right technical knowledge.

Given this, and its reliability, one might wonder why it isn't used more often. After all, it sounds very convenient to know one's future. There are several parts to the answer.

For one thing, casting a horoscope requires the subject's exact date and place of birth, which are things that not all Discworlders actually know about themselves. (Players should be required to convince the GM that their characters know these facts, if they want accurate horoscopes cast). It also requires some precise astronomical observations, which either means running a good observatory, or having recent, detailed information from one.

Part of the trouble here is that Great A'Tuin actually moves at a fair speed relative to nearby stars, and sometimes

changes course. This means that the Disc zodiac is *not* fixed; it changes noticeably within a human lifetime. Unseen University and other institutions track and publicise these changes, but not everyone has access to the data.

And lastly, Disc astrology generates predictions that closely resemble those little paragraphs that appear in our world's newspapers, albeit with flashes of greater precision. Think about that. If those glib little premonitions *really* said something about your life, would you want to know? And what use would they usually be?

Incidentally, there are 64 constellations in the Disc zodiac, but the list can change with time as the Turtle moves. Current examples include the Celestial Parsnip, Gahoolie the Vase of Tulips, Wezen the Double-Headed Kangaroo, and the Small Boring Group of Faint Stars (Rincewind's sign).

Oggham

Oggham is an ancient runic alphabet, still used by some dwarfs in the Ramtops. Nanny Ogg claims that it is somehow connected to her own (very old-established) family. It can be learned by fully literate characters as a Language Skill, as it is as much a system of symbols as anything; it is intimately related to the old languages of the region.

Oggham is not a magical language as such, but it is used in some old inscriptions of interest to characters researching ceremonial magic or rituals. There are doubtless scholars at Unseen University with at least a theoretical knowledge of it, and any witch, dwarf, or amateur historian from the Ramtops region could justify having a few points in the skill.

Vampire vs. Vampire

Discworld PC vampires are at least theoretically possible, and need not be entirely bad. NPC Vampires can be as super-powered and viciously evil as a plot may call for. There is scope here for interesting conflicts in the clash between classic monster and angst-ridden PC.

"You know, Count, all of us really admire you, except for the, well, you know. The stake, here -- this is going to really hurt me. Because you're an artist, Count. Except for -- well, it's nothing personal."

Tethis the Sea Troll

Few intelligent beings from beyond the Disc appear in the chronicles; frankly, there's more than enough variety on the world, without adding such gimmicks. However, the Discworld does move through space in a universe that seems to be as astrophysically complex as our own, and suffers from magic that can weaken dimensional barriers, so "visitors" are possible, if not advisable as PCs.

Tethis the Sea-Troll is one of the few space-travellers known on the Discworld. He was born on the water-world of Bathys, but suffered the worst fate known to a land-sailor of that disc; he fell off the edge. Eventually, he crash-landed on the Discworld, where he was found by Krullians, and enslaved as a lengthman. He later travelled briefly with Twoflower and Rincewind; his last likely location was a lake in the Forest of Skund. He is a rather melancholy being, forever aware that he does not belong here; he combines a basically peaceable nature with a full willingness to use as much force as any situation may demand.

Tethis appears to be a humanoid creature of animated water, whose height varies with the tides; he is polite and mild-mannered, but gives a clear sense of being personally formidable. Presumably, the Krullians used magic to control him.

He has ST 30, DX 13, IQ 12, and HT 20. His watery nature makes him effectively immune to physical attacks (markedly better than the standard ***GURPS*** Body of Water advantage), while letting him punch with the force of a tsunami and carry objects up to Heavy encumbrance. He can survive on land or in water; in the vacuum of space, he freezes solid and becomes inert, with the ability to thaw back to life without harm later. Fire and heat-based attacks do him full damage, although his watery body can also put fires out; cold-based attacks do him one-quarter damage, but if the full rolled damage exceeds his HT, they freeze him solid for a number of hours equal to the excess amount.

By Robin Parmar

Introduction

Much of the fun of ***INWO***comes from interacting with other players. But there are times when it's difficult to get people together and you're just itching to play. The perfect solution is a solitaire variant for ***INWO***. Since many of the Plots and special abilities cannot be applied to a single-player game, and since you are at your leisure to study the cards for as long as you wish, this is a perfect beginner's game -- kind of like ***INWO***with training wheels!

These rules are not a replacement for the standard ***INWO***rules, but rather supplement them. When in doubt as to how apply the rules, just wing it! The idea is to have fun, and no-one can accuse you of cheating.

The following is a greatly expanded version of an idea first proposed by David S. Carter, to whom I am grateful. Thanks also to the playtesters from the ***INWO*** Internet list. Write me with any comments at robin.escalation@ACM.org.

Set-Up

Take a stack of ***INWO***cards -- ranging anywhere in size from a starter deck to a full Factory Set. Divide them into three decks: Illuminati cards, Plots, and Groups. Shuffle all three decks well. Take the top card from your Illuminati deck and place in the centre of your play area as your Illuminati for the first game. Place the rest of the Illuminati cards in the To Play pile; they will not be used at this time.

Deal 15 cards from your Group deck face up; deal 14 cards from your Plot deck face down. These will be your In Play decks. Place the remaining cards in two To Play piles, to be used for future games. Look through your Group deck and select a card to use as your lead; place it in your power structure. If you choose a Resource, place this to the left side of your play area. Shuffle the remainder of the Groups and return them to the In Play area, face down.

Note: If at this point you notice that you simply don't have enough Groups in your In Play deck to win, you can count a loss and move on to the next game. Be sure to take into account Illuminati special goals and the potential of a Goal Plot card turning up.

Place action tokens on your cards.

Card Layout

After several turns of play, your card layout should look something like the following diagram.

Key:
1. Goal and New World Order cards in play.
2. Kill pile.
3. Die indicating current turn (1 to 4).
4. Groups and Illuminati in power structure.
5. Plots in current hand.
6. To Play piles.
7. Discard piles.
8. In Play piles.
9. Current cards for this turn.

Turn Sequence

A. You may add an action token to any one card, providing it does not already have its maximum.
B. Expend action tokens as appropriate to move cards, give Relief, play Plots, etc.
C.Turn over the top card from your Plot and Group decks.
D. The Plot card is evaluated first, according to its type.

- *If it is a Goal*, you may set the card to the side of the playfield and use it as an alternative goal. If you choose not to accept the Goal, discard it. Remember that you may normally have only one Goal in play.
- *If it is a New World Order,* place it to the side of the play area; it comes into effect immediately. If there is already a NWO card of the same color in effect, discard it.
- *If it is a Disaster,* the card attacks any eligible Place in your power structure. If there aren't any eligible Places for the Disaster to attack, discard it. If there is more than one such Place, determine the target randomly. Treat this as a normal Disaster attack -- remove an action token, evaluate the attack, apply Devastation.
- *If it is an Assassination,* the card attacks any eligible Personality in your power structure, as above.
- *If it is any other Plot card,* you have three choices:

    a) Play it immediately, paying the required cost if any.
    b) Place the Plot in your hand, to be used later. You may normally have a maximum of three Plot cards in your hand at any given time. If adding this card to your hand brings your total to four, you must immediately discard one of them.
    c) Discard the Plot.

E. Next, the Group card is evaluated:

- *If it is a Resource*, you may take it (place it to the side of your power structure) or discard it.

- *If it is a Group which is already in your power structure*, you must discard it, unless you have one of the few Plots which can effectively attack a duplicate group (eg: Partition).
- *If it is any other Group*, you may attempt to control or destroy it as normal. If successful, add it to the appropriate place in your power structure (or the kill pile), otherwise discard it.

F. Expend action tokens as appropriate to move cards, give Relief, play Plots, etc.
G. Move action tokens. Any action tokens you still have on a group may be moved to that group's master or puppets. An action token on your Illuminati may be moved to any group in your power structure, or to a Resource which requires actions.
H. Trade in Plot cards for action tokens. Each Plot in your hand may be discarded in exchange for one action token, which can be placed on any Group or Resource.
I. Continue to your next turn by repeating the steps from A.

Victory

You can win the game by reaching one of the usual ***INWO***goals: 1. Control 11 Groups, including your Illuminati. 2. Achieve the special Illuminati goal. 3. Achieve the conditions of a Goal card you have in play.
If you fail to win by the time you run out of cards in your In Play Plot deck (14 turns), you lose!

Conversion Rules

Obviously, many ***INWO***cards, designed for multiple players and decks, have little effect during a solitaire game. Here are some guidelines to help with interpreting cards in this setting.

- ***Bonus tokens*** Cards which provide bonus tokens (Perpetual Motion Machine, Eliza, UFOs, etc.) work as advertised. Apply these extra tokens in step A. Eliza and the Perpetual Motion Machine effectively give you a free token. The second UFO token is only applied if you choose your Illuminati as the recipient of action tokens.
- ***Extra Plot or Group draws*** Some cards mention that you may draw an extra Plot or Group card, from your or another player's hand or deck. These extra draws should always be made from the To Play piles. Thus, the Network draws two cards a turn during step C, once from the In Play Plot deck, once from the To Play Plots. Likewise, Fraternal Orders' action may be spent to draw a Group card from the To Play Group deck. Any extra cards drawn follow the usual rules as outlined in steps D and E.
- ***Discarding Plots or Groups*** Cards such as Secrets Man Was Not Meant to Know and Hoax which call for discards from your undrawn Plots should be interpreted as referring to the To Play Plot deck. Likewise, those that require discards from your hand should be taken literally to refer to the (up to) three Plots in your hand.
- ***The end of the turn*** This is defined as being step I. For example, it is during this step that Bermuda Triangle can reorganise Groups in their power structure.
- ***Holding additional Plots*** Cards such as Gnomes of Zurich, which normally allow you to hold six Plots, should now be read as meaning four Plots.
- ***Failed attacks*** On a given turn, you may only attack a Group once, unless you control Adepts of Hermes. In that case, you may attack to control as many times as you are able. If the Adepts fail to control a group, they may place it back on the In Play Group deck, and try again next turn.
- ***Privileged attacks*** These now have no meaning or effect. Sorry.
- ***Secret Groups*** Secret Groups may be attacked as if they are not Secret, until you have one or more such groups in your Power Structure. Then, the usual prohibitions apply.
- ***Looking through decks*** Cards (such as Crop Circles and Crystal Skull) which allow you to look through your deck work as usual -- peruse your In Play deck according to the instructions on the card. Cards which allow you to look through opponents' decks have no effect.
- ***Cthulhu*** Cthulhu no longer has the usual +4 bonus to destroy. Otherwise, they'd win every time.

One With Everything **World Tour**

These ***INWO***Solitaire rules work especially well if you start with the One With Everything deck. Set up for the first stop on the Illuminati World Tour as above, ensuring the Illuminati deck includes one of each Illuminati (including the Society of Assassins and Church of the Subgenius, if you wish).

When you finish the first game, draw a new Illuminati from the cards you have not yet played (Illuminati To Play deck). Likewise, deal Group and Plot cards from the unused To Play piles. As games are played, the To Play piles diminish in size while the Discard piles increase. No card will be used twice. You "win" the Tour if you manage to win four of the ten games.

A Challenging Variant

Once you've played a few games using the preceding rules, you'll get used to winning. To make the game more challenging, the following variant allows for an attack against your power structure, once every four turns. Use a die to track turns, setting it before step A. When it reaches "4", use the following sequence of steps, and then re-set it to "1" again for the next turn.

A. Do not add action tokens.
B. Expend action tokens.
C. Turn over the top card from the To Play Plot and Group decks.
D. The Plot card is evaluated first, according to its type.

- *If it is a Goal,* discard it.
- *If it is a New World Order,* it comes into effect immediately.
- *If it is a Disaster,* the card attacks any eligible Place in your power structure.
- *If it is an Assassination,* the card attacks any eligible Personality in your power structure.
- *If it is any other Plot card,* it may be applied either alone or in combination with the Group card as an attack on your power structure.

E. Next, the Group card is evaluated:

- *If it is a Resource and can be used to attack* (either alone or in combination with the Plot) it does so. An example of such a card is the Suicide Squad. If it is a non-unique Resource which replaces previous instances (eg: Blivit), it effectively destroys your similar Resource. Otherwise, discard the Resource.
- *If it is a Group,* it will attack a card in your power structure, either to control or destroy, whichever is more likely to succeed. Choose the target for the attack by determining which attack is most likely to succeed. If there is more than one candidate, determine the target randomly. Roll two dice and add this number to the power of the attack. This simulates other groups assisting the attacking card. You may attempt to interfere with this attack as usual. If the attack succeeds, your card and all its puppets and sub-puppets are discarded.
  If the attacking Group duplicates one which is already in your power structure, the card will attack the corresponding group, with the usual +10 Agent bonus.
- Both of the above cases assume that the attacking card comes with a full complement of action tokens. If you have a Group or Plot card that can cancel the appropriate actions (eg: Nuclear Power Companies, Are We Having Fun Yet?), then use them!

F. Expend action tokens.
G. Move action tokens.
H. Trade in Plot cards for action tokens.
I. Continue to your next turn by repeating steps from A.

Character Development for Martial Characters

by Sean Dugan

In a midnight alleyway, a youth slid through shadows, his eyes raking the corners, his hand nervous on the hilt of his dagger. Covering his back was a fair-skinned barbarian from the eastern plains, a blue-eyed hulk marked with the scars of many battles.

The pair picked their way carefully through the alleyway. Garbage crunched and split damply beneath their boots, and it was a long time before they finally came within sight of an opulent building, more fortress than home. The goal. At last.

"Var, my friend," whispered the youth, "The only thing that's kept me going these last three years is dreaming of this night. I will not only have my fortune, but I will kill the man who slew my only brother." The young man's eyes shone with a light more brilliant than the moonlight could provide.

The barbarian grunted in a non-committal fashion.

The young thief sighed, peering into the eyes of his barbaric companion. Before he could face Vanatar, before he could fully enjoy *this night, he had a question to ask.*

"Var . . . As I prepare for my vengeance, please tell me: Why have you accompanied me on these tired quests? I know what drives me, but why do you risk your life now? You have no quarrel with Vanatar, and the fortune to be gained may be no greater than that you'd earn as a mercenary. So, Var - why?"

The barbarian got a puzzled look on his face, and his mouth contorted as he tried to find the words.

"Uh, well, the party already had a thief and a wizard, and a priest didn't seem to fit, so I went with a fighter."

It is unfortunate that one of the most stereotyped characters in role playing games is the ubiquitous fighter. From the classic "quadrivium" of Fighter, Cleric, Mage and Thief to the battlesuited trooper of the far future, the warrior is the muscle that every group needs; yet frequently he's one of the least developed characters. Thieves and merchants have an obvious motive in profit, priests and mages are driven by zeal for powers beyond mortal understanding, scientists and explorers have new horizons to conquer . . . but, before you can breathe life into your fighter, you must decide why he fights.

A character that devotes his life to the fighting arts can be a complex individual. It takes a special breed to focus his life on conflict, to make a living pitting his life against the lives of others. Most people work hard to avoid pain and suffering, and especially the risk of death, but a warrior devotes his time and energies to perfecting the art of combat. Not in any form a pursuit to be taken lightly, the decision to take up arms is a vocation that calls to some very interesting people.

Despite the near-infinite variety of fighter character-types, many can be reduced to three basic archetypes common in cinema and literature: The *Avenger* takes out their pain on the world, the *Professional* is a man of duty and the *Warrior* seeks perfection in his art. Each of these have different motivations, and approach the world of combat from a different viewpoint. Choosing one of these archetypes may help a player develop a deeper understanding of his character's motivations and personality.

The Avenger

The Avenger is man who has suffered some pain, and takes it out on the world, sometimes with cruelty, and sometimes because he simply can't express his rage any other way. The most typical example of the type is the stereotyped "thug" of movies and literature, bullies reveling in the power of hurting others. Most despise them, but also fear them. They are essentially sadists. They usually come to nasty end at the hands of a more powerful brute.

This does not mean that the Avenger has to lack depth. It's interesting to play a character who is the walking wounded, emotionally speaking - someone who was trampled as a child, leaving that little kid inside alone and angry (or even traumatized as an adult, with equally dramatic result). Rage dominates the Avenger, and sends him on a mission. The brutish and cruel varieties of Avenger take out their anger on the entire world. The more refined Avenger focuses his rage on some smaller part of it - the criminal element, perhaps, or a racial group.

Comic Books are filled with this type of character; DC Comics' Batman is one of the more endearing examples. The Batman was brutalized as a child, witnessing the horrible death of his parents. He grew to manhood, still emotionally bruised. He avenges his parents' death on a hard world. Batman is not an indiscriminate brute: He scrupulously limits his punishment to those who are criminal in his eyes.

Another example is Conan, as portrayed in the original short stories and in both comics and film. In the film, Conan sets out with every intention of punishing the world for his childhood. He victimizes others the way he was victimized. Conan becomes fixated on Thulsa Doom, but when he finally kills him, it is anti-climactic: Doom is dead, but Conan is still, essentially, wounded. His pain cannot be purged so easily. Conan stalks off with a heavy brow, learning that his pain is something he has to come to terms with on his own. Conan evolves in the story, learning something from his experience, the mark of a good character. At his heart, the Avenger gains some emotional satisfaction, a catharsis, from conflict with others.

The Professional

He is bound by duty and circumstance. He may not even like to kill, but it's his job. Many professionals are trapped in circumstances beyond their control; others embrace their duty as the only real source of meaning in their lives. Reluctant or enthusiastic, however, the Professional does his job, and works to do it well.

In ***Lethal Weapon***, Martin Riggs (portrayed by Mel Gibson) is a striking example of how this archetype can be. The scene where he is speaking to Danny Glover, and shyly tells him that the only thing he was ever good at is killing, is a defining moment. Riggs is trapped - not by family obligation, poverty, or a sense of duty - but by his own estimation of what he's good for. He's a cop, because it's one of the few socially acceptable places for him to do what he knows how to do. He loved his wife, and when she died, the only thing he had left to cling to was his job. He's a guy holding onto duty and sanity by his fingernails. Without his job, he would kill himself.

Many of the Japanese samurai were similarly bound into their roles. They were focused on protecting their lord; duty was their life. A samurai without a lord, a *ronin*, was a despised creature. The Kevin Costner movie ***The Bodyguard*** can be viewed as a thinly veiled tale of a samurai. His honor, life and duty are the protection of his client. The Professional frequently has a personal code of honor.

A lot of Professionals go to great pains to hone their skill, but they do so to serve their defining goal. Some kill coldly,

without mercy or remorse. It's just a job, after all; it's nothing personal.

A theme of many films about this kind of killer is the character's disillusionment with killing. The desire to perform "one last job" to get out of the business can result in tragedy, as in John Woo's ***The Killer,*** where two Professionals, standing on opposite sides of the law, find a bond in their similarities just in time for a bloody climax where only one survives.

The Warrior

The Warrior seeks perfection in the purging fires of combat. To the Warrior, fighting is both the end and means. They are transcendent, and often aloof; many love to fight, but are loathe to kill. The mystic martial arts master is probably the classic example of this character, from Caine in the original ***Kung Fu*** to Obi-Wan Kenobi in ***Star Wars***. Such characters are both deadly and cryptic. They are understood fully only by others like them, which limits the depths of their friendships.

Many gunfighters in westerns are essentially Warriors. They stand for an ideal, the freedom of the rugged individualist, against an ignoble and corrupt world that seeks to bend them. The Warrior frequently has such skill in his chosen profession that he is nearly superhuman - the "cinematic" ideal of martial perfection.

Historical accuracy aside, the mystic Warrior can be fun to play. Musashi's ***Book of Five Rings*** provides some of the best inspirational reading on the subject. The Warrior is frequently very moral, an enigmatic seeker of some higher truth that can only be found in the perfection of his art.

The Archetypes in Action

The Mechanic, starring Charles Bronson and Jan Michael Vincent, gives us a look at what happens when two different archetypes clash. Bronson is a Professional hit man, just doing his job. Vincent is an Avenger, getting his kicks by inflicting pain upon others. Eventually, the two men's different attitudes come into conflict, with predictable results for both.

Probably the quintessential study of the fighter is Kurasowa's ***The Seven Samurai*** or the American remake, The ***Magnificent Seven.*** All three archetypes are included, providing a classic model for character interactions in play.

When creating a new "fighter" character for a role playing campaign, picture him as each of the three archetypes in turn. Odds are, one will stand out above the others, throwing your fighter into sharp relief and breathing extra life into him. And of course, these three are only a beginning - more archetypes can be defined, and your games will benefit.

Conflict is a part of human nature, and some specialize in conflict. Rather than relegating the fighter to the cardboard character who dispatches the occasional fanged menace, work to create a character who has emotions, needs and goals. Who says an all-fighter party needs to be dull?

Greek Fire

A *GURPS Time Travel* adventure by Andrea Sfiligoi

This is a short time-traveling scenario originally written for a campaign mixing ***Illuminati*** intrigue with the *Order of the Hourglass* background (see ***GURPS Time Travel***). However, it can be easily adapted to any time traveling campaign featuring attempts to meddle with history. It assumes that history can be changed, at least at focal points, by subtle intervention.

The PCs belong to (or are hired by) a group that works to prevent time-meddlers from succeeding. They know (or are informed by their patron agency) that a team of assassins has recently been sent to Constantinople in the year 659 AD, to terminate Kallinikos (also known as Callinicus), the Syrian inventor of the legendary Greek Fire. Fortunately for Real Time, the attempt failed, but the assassins are launching another hit in the year 677 AD, one month before the Arab fleet attacks Constantinople. History teaches that the attack is doomed: the Byzantine fleet will win, employing the invention of Kallinikos to set fire to the Arab ships.

Anyone succeeding in a History roll understands that without the Greek fire, the odds of the battle are unbalanced in favor of the Arab forces. Someone who wants to rewrite this famous battle between west and east is responsible for the assassins. In an Illuminated campaign, this could be a plot of the Society of Assassins to avoid a great defeat for Islam - the Arabs did not attack Byzantium for 40 years after that battle, possibly because of the morale-shattering effect of the waters set ablaze by Byzantine science.

What the Players Don't Know

The intelligence presented to the PCs is in error: The first attempt to kill Kallinikos succeeded. A colleague of the PCs was sent in time to prevent the assassination, but he did not. This colleague is Alexandros Sokos, a Greek scientist and time traveler who wanted to meet Kallinikos personally to discover the secret of Greek fire.

(If it makes no sense for Sokos to be a colleague, then he is hired by the PCs' organization, his mission a secret to the PCs because of the Observer Effect.)

When Sokos arrived, it was too late: the wounded and poisoned Syrian alchemist died in his arms without letting the secret formula slip. Sokos was terribly shocked by his failure, and suffered from extreme personality dissociation - like many eccentric geniuses, he wasn't entirely stable to begin with. The death of Kallinikos pushed him over the edge. Sokos suffered from a strong self-induced delusion, believing himself to be the real Kallinikos, having miraculously survived the poisoning.

Kallinikos/Sokos kept a low profile, denouncing to the authorities the assassins who were still prowling the streets. The killers were taken by surprise by Imperial guards and slain without any qualm. Sokos learned to impersonate Kallinikos, disguising himself, aided in this by the fact that the Syrian alchemist had virtually no friends or acquaintances. Sokos told himself that he suffered from amnesia, and couldn't remember the Greek fire formula - so he spent the next few years researching it, calling on his knowledge of modern chemistry to back up the barely sufficient equipment available in Byzantium. Sokos managed to build oil-refining machines out of alchemical instruments, and

to make napalm mixing gasoline and animal fat. When the PCs arrive in Byzantium, he is still experimenting to find the right blend to perfect Greek Fire.

The Opposition

Those who sent the original killers, like the PCs, believe that the original team failed, perhaps due to the intervention of other time travelers. They sent several teams in different times to hunt down "Kallinikos," but each failed to locate the scientist. Therefore, their leaders decide to kill Kallinikos just before he passes the secret of Greek fire to the Byzantine generals, when he will have no choice but to expose himself. At this point, the PCs learn about the attack on Kallinikos and must travel in time to prevent it.

The GM has to decide how this information leaks out of the assassins' organization. Maybe there's a traitor among them, or some past foe with high sense of honor owes one of the PCs (or their patrons) a favor. In campaign with mystical powers, someone might have a retrocognitive vision, or a friendly telepath might "eavesdrop" an assassin's thoughts. In an Illuminated campaign, the time travelers' masters will surely have their own unguessable methods for obtaining information from enemy operatives.

Background: The Second Rome

Detailed information about Byzantium can be obtained from any history book, and is beyond the scope of this adventure. Suffice it to say that Constantinople renewed the splendor and culture of Rome, while in Europe the barbarians were establishing their kingdoms. Like the Romans, the Byzantines loved chariot racing and cultural events. Unlike the Romans, they disliked gladiatorial combats, being influenced by Greek philosophy and a less Roman Christianity. The city itself was protected by triple walls, built in the fifth century by Emperor Theodosius II, and enjoyed a strategically sound position suitable for both commerce and defense. Her Emperors used money and gifts to make friends with the northern barbarians, and maintained a powerful, well-equipped army and a sleek fleet to defend its strongholds. Byzantine militias made effective use of cartography and advanced (for the time) strategic theory. The Byzantine heavy cavalry was equipped in the equivalent of half-plate armor, and a shield-and-spear armament that was a precursor of knightly lance-and-shield. They used short, powerful bows similar to those employed by the surrounding barbarian enemies.

At the time of this adventure, the priests were a powerful and respected caste. Religious debate was fueled by the theories of Monotelism (a school of thought concerning itself with the presence of divine will in Jesus Christ). The Emperor was Contantinos Pogonatos IV, son to Constant II.

PCs arrive when and how the GM sees fit, according to the time travel mechanics used in the campaign. During their investigations, the characters may raise the attentions of city guards, militiamen or members of the Emperor's elite cadre. Use the following statistics, raising all combat skills by one and decreasing Area Knowledge by one for members of the Emperor's guard (many of them were hired barbarians).

Byzantine Militiamen
ST 12 **DX** 11 **IQ** 10 **HT** 10
Advantages: Toughness 1; Military Rank; Combat Reflexes (one in six has this Advantage); Legal Enforcement Powers (may carry weapons, right to search and jail suspicious strangers).
Veterans are Comfortable.
Disadvantage: Duty to citizens and emperor
Notable Skills: Spear 12, Shortsword 12, Riding 13, Shield 12, Tactics 12. Interrogation 11, Running 8, Area Knowledge: Byzantium 10, Bow 13.

Kallinikos/Sokos has a minor reputation as an eccentric alchemist, known to a few select communities in Constantinople. This may allow investigators to locate his semi-secret lab with a Streetwise-3 roll and appropriate roleplaying.

In addition, the sources the PCs may contact will also tell several rumors, both true and false, about the man:

- Kallinikos behaves very prudently, as a man who has enemies hunting him down (true; Sokos subconsciously remembers that the original Kallinikos was killed, and fears the same fate).
- Kallinikos is blackmailing the government of Constantinople, trying to rise the price of one of his inventions (false; he is temporizing, because he fears that his formula may fall into the wrong hands).
- Kallinikos is put under pressure by Stephanos, one of the Emperor's counselors (true: Stephanos wants him to explain how the "Greek fire" is produced to all of his engineers, to start a mass production for the fleet). Stephanos is very powerful, as he is the nephew of the Patriarch of Constantinople.

Kallinikos is an avid fan of chariot racing and illegal gladiatorial combats and can be found often at these events. He also has a young assistant, a 16-years old boy named Achilles, who goes around gathering ingredients for his experiments. Achilles formerly worked at a butcher shop where Kallinikos bought great quantities of animal fat he used to "gel" his Greek fire. Kallinikos noticed the good will and intelligence of the young man and asked him to be his assistant. He is also rumored to feel homosexual attraction for the boy, but this is not true (at least in Sokos' case; it may have been so for the original Kallinikos).

Achilles
ST 10 **IQ** 13 **DX** 12 **HT** 11
Advantages: Attractive appearance, Literacy.
Disadvantages: Sense of Duty to Kallinikos, Poor, Impulsiveness.
Quirks: Calls Kallinikos "father"; likes spicy food; wants to become an alchemist.
Notable Skills: Area Knowledge Byzantyum 13; Chemistry 9; Running 9; Swimming 10.

While looking for Kallinikos, the PCs may stumble upon Stephanos' spies. Use the stats given for city militia, adding Stealth 12 and Streetwise 11. Some of the spies are newly hired and one of the assassins come from the future is hiding among them, under the name Marsilios. He meets his companions in a sleazy inn where they've been heard speaking "a strange barbarian tongue" (only a very good Streetwise roll will reveal this). There are a total of five agents. They belong to whatever agency or group the GM feels fit for his campaign. Their default statistics are:

Temporal Assassins
ST 10 **DX** 12 **IQ** 12 **HT** 11
Advantages: Combat Reflexes; Patron (the Agency)
Disadvantages: Duty (kill Kallinikos, steal the secret of Greek fire); Fanaticism.
Notable Skills: Acting 12; Detect Lies 11; Interrogation 11;Fast-Draw (Knife) 13; Stealth 13; Knife 14; Throwing Knife 14; Riding 11; Shadowing 12; Streetwise 11;Disguise 12;Poisons 13; Tactics 12; Greek 14.

One is a technician and can operate at 12 whatever equipment the campaign and temporal physics allow. In a fight, they try to close and use their poisoned daggers; the poison takes its course in 2-7 turns, gives -2 on DX for 1-6 hours and inflicts four dice of damage. The effects are halved on a successful HT-2 roll. If they discover the PCs, they will try to poison them in whatever manner is appropriate.

Kallinikos' Secret Lab

The scientist works in a small house. The entrance to his secret lab is a door hidden by a Syrian tapestry. Here, Sokos has built from alchemical equipment all he needs to make Greek fire. If he detects anyone shadowing him, the old man will try to defend himself using vials of acid and other toxic compounds. If Achilles is present, he will defend him with any means.

Kallinikos (Alexandros Sokos)
ST 10 **IQ** 15 **DX** 10 **HT** 9
Advantages: 60-point Eidetic Memory; access to knowledge of the TL he comes from.
Disadvantages: Age (65); Delusion (I am the Syrian alchemist Kallinikos and my special knowledge comes from divine inspiration).
Quirks: Loves illegal gladiatorial combat and chariot racing, Dislikes theological discussion, Pessimistic, Loves Achilles as a son.
Skills: Bard 18, Chemistry 20, Byzantine Greek 18, Syrian 16, Modern Greek 16, Attic Greek 18, Theology 14, Disguise 13, History 18 (specializing in Greek History), Gambling 15, Acting 14,Temporal Physics 19.

Today, Sokos is all but indistinguishable from the original Kallinikos. When the mystery is solved, characters skilled in Temporal Physics might understand that his delusion may well be the effect of the timestream's attempts to resist alteration. If Sokos is brought back to his own time, the mental compulsion will gradually wear off.

Characters speaking to Sokos may attempt a Psychology -4 roll to understand that he is delusional in some way (but leave the exact nature of the delusion as something to be deduced in play). Obviously, his knowledge of modern chemistry may betray his true nature. Note that Detect Lies will not work, as Sokos truly believes to be Kallinikos.

What happens when the PCs arrive depends entirely on their actions. If they do not locate Kallinikos in time, the assassins will get him. If the PCs are out to save the timestream, they'll probably want to save his life and make sure that the Greek fire formula is given to the fleet's engineers in time to defend Constantinople from the 677 AD naval attack. Otherwise, history risks being changed.

One course of action worth nudging the party towards (if they get stuck) is to ask audience to the Emperor (Constantinos Pogonatos IV) himself, thus making the Greek fire a public affair. If PCs help Kallinikos to set up a private meeting with the Emperor, the scientist will build a miniature diorama with model ships and small Greek fire flame projectors. Hopefully, this will impress the Emperor. If all goes well, but one or more Temporal assassins survive, they will attack the general's ship just before the battle, trying to set fire to the flame projector (an easy feat) and to kill general Nikemakos.

Ideally, the Byzantine fleet should win the battle (with napalm!) and Sokos should be returned to his time. There are no other historically recorded actions of the alchemist, so this could happen without disturbing the timestream's resistance or the Observer effect.

The Last AH Employee

A Eulogy for Avalon Hill, by Bill Levay

Good evening to all my friends,

If you are looking for a tell all or expose, go elsewhere. I just want to express some of my thoughts. Fair warning: it will get maudlin but I'll take it as my right.

I was introduced to AH gaming when I was 13 years old with the game ***"1914".*** That was 31 years ago. As a child, then, I used to dream of working at AH. I suppose it is kind of silly but I guess when you are young . . . Well, sometimes dreams do come true. As far as AH staffers go, I *am* a young'un. I only started working there three years and three months ago. As a matter of fact, Don Greenwood and I share the same starting day anniversary (May 8th.) He had just finished his 26th year there. I consider it an honor.

I feel incredibly fortunate to have gotten to know and work with Joe Amoral, Jason Behnke, Mark Cavey, JC Connors, Mark Glidden, Don Greenwood, Mark Hall, Dave Hiller, Ben Knight, Rich Kuryk, Chris Lawrence, Bob MacNamara, Mark Murnane, Kurt Miller, Jamie Nash, Ken Robison, Ryan Shannon, Tom Shaw (while in semi-retirement), Mark Simonitch, Stuart Tucker, Dan Walker, and Robert Waters. I'm sure some name has slipped, and I apologise for that. Oh, and these are only the direct emp loyees *I* worked with. Some of these names you may know and some you may not. I assure you, each and every one of them had some small or huge impact in making the games we are all talking about.

I NEVER IMAGINED, 31 YEARS AGO, THAT **I** WOULD BE THE ONE TURNING OUT THE LIGHTS HERE. It is not something that I am proud of. I am so very sad, and I can't even say that I lost my job . . . at least not yet.

Why do I call myself the last AH employee? Well, this morning we all got the bad news. However, because of my technical background I will be staying on and moving to web design and network services for Monarch Services and *Girls' Life*. As long as I'm in that building, AH as we knew it will remain alive, if not for you, then inside of me. Remember, I will have to walk in and out of a building that will be filled with "ghosts."

What was my job (better yet, who the hell am I?) A LOT of things, but my cherished one was "the boss" in R&D. I can tell you that it was a pleasure to work with such talented and self motivated "artists". Yes, I consider game designers and programmers as artists even if they didn't touch a brush (digital or otherwise). Besides, how can someone be the boss of people like Don or Bob. BTW, for all you tournament winners at Avaloncon, I was the one taking your plaque pictures!

What do I think Hasbro will do? I really don't have a clue. My only hope is that some executive there grew up on AH games and is willing to give the name the respect it has earned since 1954. Yes, I know, a billion dollar company always keeps an eagle eye on the bottom line, so don't expect altruism. However, since they are interested in the bottom line, a letter writing campaign would be in order and may produce results if the numbers are high enough. Look, it did save Star Trek long ago. AH gamers are every bit as dedicated as my Trekker friends. If everyone that has bought and enjoyed AH games were to write a thoughtful, NON-FLAMING, letter . . . Well, I assure you that's a lot of

people.

One thought you should also keep in mind: Regardless of what has been said of the management of AH, the fact that the bottom line wasn't the one and only thing they kept in mind is one of the reasons that we were blessed with AH games for as long as we were. In fact, Eric and Jack had a lot of faith in our customers, and indeed kept it going as long as they could.

My only regret is that I don't have the capital to start a game company with my dear friends. The saddest thing, to me, will be that this exceptional TEAM is now going to be scattered to the four winds. It's hard to convey the sense of camaraderie that we had together . . . you should have been there. The best I can come to describe it, is the closeness you see at Avaloncon between people from all walks of life that are bonded by the love of our games.

Avaloncon? I may be an optimist, but I believe that Don will make every effort to have a "Doncon" at the same bat place and at the same bat time. He will certainly be pursuing it. As a matter of fact, he told me today that the internet made this year's Avaloncon the easiest to organize. He also has credibility with the Marriott hotel. BTW, for those that are curious, Don will be spending the last remaining hours at AH processing all the paperwork from the tournaments of the last Avaloncon. I will finish processing the plaque winner pictures and posting them to the Avaloncon site. Once AH is "officially" part of Hasbro, I want to take the pictures for 1997 and 1998 and put them on my personal web space. You deserve the recognition.

The General? Sadly, it appears that unless someone is willing to buy it from AH, it is history. Please check with Eric Dott, but I believe it may be detachable from the Hasbro deal since they don't want it. I someone buys it, please allow me to plug Stuart Tucker as the best choice for editor. He's a dedicated boardgame designer and gamer and I think has done wonders within the constraints he had to work with.

Honestly... I feel very badly that I can't help my friends and co-workers stay employed in this industry. Regardless of what they have said to 'em, I have to take it as a personal failure. Ben, JC, and Chris will be at GenCon . . . make sure you stop and say hello to them.

Alright, so it was maudlin and sentimental . . . but so what, it's my soap box, and now you can feel free to flame me for it. Also, and I know you don't need my permission, but go ahead and repost this as you feel necessary. It is not an "official" AH commentary... it is my own personal tribute to the Guys on the Hill.

Thank you all for a wonderful 31 years,

--*Bill Levay*

Editor's Note: Bill Levay posted the preceding letter to rec.games.board just after the completion of the Hasbro buyout of Avalon Hill. We at *Pyramid* found what Bill had written to be both moving and sobering, so we asked his permission to present it here. He kindly granted it.

Random Events for Cyberpunk Games

By John W. Baichtal

Art by Dan Smith

The following table is a Game Master's aid - a random events generator suitable for any kind of urban near-future campaign, from ***Cyberpunk 2020*** to ***Shadowrun*** to ***GURPS Cyberworld*****.** With a shoehorn and some grease, it can also be used to inject a dystopian flavor into other campaign worlds, as well - just substitute alchemy for drugs for fantasy, or starships for helicopters for space opera.

The table generates Big News - the kind of events that will rock the headlines if they are public knowledge. But of course, they don't always have to *be* public; each result includes "Adventure Hook" notes on how the PCs can become personally involved, and the entire event might remain secret. In this way, the table can be used to generate "background noise" for an ongoing campaign, or to generate entire plots directly for the PCs. In general, events of this magnitude should be rolled for monthly.

Cyberpunk Events Table (1d100)

01-02 Air Vehicle Crashes: A large flying vehicle (a plane, space shuttle, or helicopter) arrows into the heart of the city, killing many. The crash may be accidental, or the result of attack or sabotage. *Adventure Hooks:* The PCs may know somebody who was on the craft. Are they alive? A valuable object might have been on board.

03-05 Arch-Criminal Apprehended: A boostergang leader or other organized crime figure is captured by the authorities. He or she may eventually escape, stand trial, or simply vanish. *Adventure Hooks:* Maybe he has some dirt on the PCs, and is eager to sell them out to bargain in court.

06-07 Arms/Ammo Blockade: Peace-desiring politicians cordon off the city and forbid the importation of any weapons or ammunition; legal sales are forbidden, and

black-market weapons prices skyrocket. The blockade lasts 1d10 months before it is finally abandoned. *Adventure Hooks:* Plenty of opportunities for employment, and also plenty of opportunities to have nice weapons stolen by desperate "friends."

08-11 Atrocity: A large number of innocents is slaughtered by the local corporate or government authorities, and the community is outraged. *Adventure Hooks:* Maybe for once, the authorities are innocent of the slaughter. Could be a twisty mystery if the PCs get tangled up in it.

12-13 Assassination: An important personage is "whacked" by a professional hit team. Maybe even in broad daylight. *Adventure Hooks:* The PCs might be key witnesses, hunted down by unknown forces.

14-16 Bloody Corporate Raid: One corp gets bullish and decides to create a monopoly by removing the competition. This raid attracts special note because of the large number of bodies. *Adventure Hooks:* In the wake of such a raid, corporate security often has trouble locking down the premises - could be a fun time to loot.

17-19 Bomb Detonated: A bomb is detonated outside of a corporate headquarters, city hall, barracks, or other target by a terrorist group. *Adventure Hooks:* "Hey! That was *my* car!"

20-24 Gang War: The triggermen of two or more gangs begin fighting over turf, the war lasts for 2d10 months and causes hundreds of deaths. *Adventure Hooks:* Toward the end, one side or another will begin desperate recruiting measures to even the score. The PCs could play along, or become double-agents and make the most of both sides.

25-27 Celebrity Visit: A president, movie star, rocker, or other famous person arrives amid a bustle of bureaucrats and groupies. *Adventure Hooks:* Maybe it's somebody the PCs need to get a personal audience with - or maybe the celebrity is a *fake,* and the PCs find out. Can they pull off turning that info to their advantage?

28-29 Computer Virus: A destructive and ingenious virus impacts nearly every computer system in the city, paralyzing communications, electronic commerce, and control systems. The virus lasts 3d10 days before it's finally cleaned out. *Adventure Hooks:* The virus might be a dangerous prank, a deliberate act of sabotage against the city, or it *might* be a noisy coverup for any number of

crimes or acts of terrorism - a lot goes unnoticed when an electronic culture is put on hold.

30-31 Coup: The exact effects of the coup depend on the campaign. If the city is autonomous, then City Hall is taken over by a corp, mercenary group, boostergang, or military clique. In a setting where such a bold move would be unlikely, then the coup occurs in a major gang or a corporation. *Adventure Hooks:* Shifts in power on the Macro scale effect everybody - this is a good time to shake the ground beneath the players' feet, and see how they bounce back from changes in the way they get their supplies, who they go to for jobs, and who they can trust for information.

32-35 Draconian Law Passed: A special interest manages to railroad a peculiar and harsh new law through the city council; examples could include outlawing fashionware or restriction of rights for those with cyber-implants. *Adventure Hooks:* The PCs are probably *used* to doing illegal things, so this event will have more impact if it hits the party indirectly - harming somebody they care about, or benefitting somebody that they can't stand.

36-38 Draft: The government, a powerful corporation or another entity begins forcibly mustering an army for some suicide mission across the continent, overseas, or even in the orbital or lunar colonies (if there are some). *Adventure Hooks:* Maybe the PC's aren't drafted. Instead, they're hired to *get themselves drafted* , for an employer who needs a hidden ace in the coming war.

39-42 Drug Plague: A deadly new designer drug hits the streets, and there is a large increase in the number of zombies, crazed junkies, drug peddlers, and other effluvia of the chemical subcultures. *Adventure Hooks:* It might just be a particularly popular designer drug, or it might be the work of a higher power trying to manipulate the public. When people start vanishing, it's time to face the side effects . . .

43-46 Election: An important civil election is held, preceded by a lengthy period of campaigning, including all manner of dirty tricks and skullduggery. *Adventure Hooks:* From sleazy sex at party conventions to outright murder to protect a reputation, politics has plenty to offer the campaign - and it's even more interesting if the PCs are given a genuine reason to take sides *other* than mercenary opportunity.

47-50 Environmental Disaster: A tanker of toxic something-or-other breaks open, flooding the immediate area with extremely nasty and harmful gunk. *Adventure Hooks:* The area will be quickly blocked off to contain the problem - but what if there's something in that area that needs dealt with, right now? The PCs to the rescue - but they'd better be careful not to get holes in their HAZ-MAT suits . . .

51-52 Fire: During a dry period, an arsonist starts a blaze that eventually destroys a huge swath of the neighboring suburbs and threatens the heart of the city itself. *Adventure Hooks:* Under just the wrong conditions, an urban blaze can tear on for days, filling the sky with smoke, firefighting helicopters, and screaming sirens. Maybe someplace the PCs care about is threatened. Maybe the city decides that it's worth sacrificing a few residential blocks to make a a firewall.

53-55 Hot New Fashionware Introduced: An innovative and

stylish new fashionware line (phosphorescent skin dye, animated tattoos, etc.) is marketed. Be the first in your boostergang . . . *Adventure Hooks:* When dealing with those with Big Money, knowledge of what's hip and what's stale can be a matter of employment or poverty. Seeing if the PCs can keep up with the trends when it becomes a matter of money can add a light diversion to the campaign.

56-58 Irritating New Trend: The younger set gets into a really stupid new trend, like wearing clothes several sizes too big or clomping around in elevator shoes. *Adventure Hooks:* Five Words - It's Fun To Shoot Them.

59-60 Major Rock Concert is Held: The hottest bands of the year hold a huge concert, with overpriced tickets and scads of supremely radical T-shirts. *Adventure Hooks:* The vultures come out to play when thousands of screaming kids gather *en masse* to show how alternative they are. Maybe the PCs will be those vultures. Alternately, a few go missing, and they have important and wealthy parents who want them back.

61-63 MegaCorp Leaves Town: To the joy of some people and the consternation of others, a major corporation packs its bags, closes its factories, and leaves town (probably in search of greener pastures, tax-wise). *Adventure Hooks:* Like result 30-31, above, this can mean radical shifts in how people do business on every level. Also, there's often a huge vacuum to be filled - the PCs might have a line on something that could fill it, and it might be time for a move from the street to the boardroom. Alternately, minor wars can spring up as the remaining corps fight over the wreckage.

64-65 Moral Crusade: A popular local figure tries to cleanse the city of "wickedness". He or she quits, utterly dejected, after 1d10 weeks. *Adventure Hooks:* It can be a really different kind of adventure if the PCs find that they have a legitimate reason to *help* the hapless crusader of decency, even if only for a little while.

66-68 Natural Disaster: A tornado, earthquake, tidal wave, drought, hurricane, or other natural disaster strikes the city. *Adventure Hooks:* Disasters open up walls that are impossible to open otherwise, inconvenience people that are otherwise untouchable, and can turn an ordinary populace into a rat-pack mob, killing each other for a can of dog food. A fine time to be alive and mercenary.

69-71 New Virtual World Opens Up: An intense new virtual world is opened up, a masterwork of imagination and technology. Admittance is expensive, but considered worth it. *Adventure Hooks:* In some cases, a new virtual realm might as well be a new drug (see above). However, it can also just be a great new place to hang out, explore, meet new people and make new contacts. Rather than casting the new online haven as an overtly addictive problem, see if you can be sneaky enough to really *get* the PCs hooked on it, by making it a better place than they've ever been.

72-73 Radical New Musical Group: A hot new act breaks into the music biz, but becomes utterly dull and tedious after 2d10 months. *Adventure Hooks:* See result 56-58, above.

74-75 Riot: A devastating riot lasting 3d10 hours rocks the city, resulting in looting and destruction in poor neighborhoods. Wealthy areas, however, are untouched. *Adventure Hooks:* Aside from the usual potential for illicit gain when things go badly, a riot also makes a great "monkey wrench" to throw into the middle of an operation that needs an added complication.

76-79 Robbery: A daring heist results in the theft of an art collection, diamond cache, or other fabulous treasure. *Adventure Hooks:* Maybe the PCs were trying to steal it, but somebody beat them to it. Maybe the PCs find out that the "treasure" was really *dangerous* , and try to warn the thieves before the entire city pays the price. But of course, the

thieves think it's just a trick . . .

80-83 Police Brutality: The public, and particularly the underclass, becomes shocked and upset by a particularly nasty example of police brutality. *Adventure Hooks:* As relations between ordinary people and the police become more strained, it gets harder to get decent cop contacts at a *very* inopportune time for the PCs, who need one badly. This could take a lot of donuts.

84-87 Power Blackout: Most of the power to the city is cut off by sabotage or accident. The blackout lasts 2d10 hours. *Adventure Hooks:* It could be for a coverup, like the computer virus (above). But even if the PCs never run across the real reason - things are going to go *crazy* in the darkness. The GM can use it as an opportunity to shake up relationships with trusted NPCs - times like that are times that can be a real test of friendship.

88-91 Scandal: A supposedly squeaky-clean public figure is found to be an adulterer, drug addict, embezzler, or other variety of lowlife. *Adventure Hooks:* The public figure's PR people decide that their meal ticket's image is still salvagable, if they can get a fall guy or three to divert the blame to. Will the PCs do it for money? If not, the PR mob might decide that they can still do it for free.

92-95 Serial Killer: A clever, maniacal slayer stalks the city, going after a certain type of person - strippers, used car salesmen, people named Cindy, whatever. *Adventure Hooks:* If the PCs have a stripper friend named Cindy, they might have to hurry down to her used car lot before it's too late. But even that assumes that they figure out the pattern in time. And one of the PCs keeps having blackouts, losing hours at a time from his memory . . .

96-97 Technological Innovation: A cool new gadget is introduced, such as a cheap flying car, a thumbnail-sized computer, and so on. *Adventure Hooks:* Perhaps the PCs are sympathetic (or simply loyal) to the corp that manufactures the older, more expensive flying car or the palm-sized computer. A campaign of sabotage could result. Or maybe the PCs become privy to a problem with the new wonder-widget that the manufactures are willing to kill to hide.

98-100 No occurrence or GM's choice: If you're rolling for a monthly "news" event in an ongoing campaign, this month is strangely devoid of scandal, disaster, or danger. If you're rolling to build a random plot, roll again, or choose something that strikes your fancy.

Campaign-Generation: Some Examples

The GM has run out of plot ideas, so he breaks out the ten-sided dice and decides to give his imagination a random boost. He rolls a 28, a 15, a 16, a 3, an 84, and a 10 (he rolls six times since he's decided that he wants the campaign to represent about six months of game time).

He interprets the rolls as follows: A terrible corporate battle - a computer virus rocks the city, used by one corporation against another and then accidentally loosed on the whole community. The next two months see two vicious corporate raids as each corp seeks to retaliate against the other, and the stakes of the war escalate. The whole community is in uproar, and politicians call for a blockade to prevent new supplies of arms from entering the city. The corps respond to that particular bucket of ice water by setting it to boil: one begins looting the property of the other company, focusing on the now-illegal arms caches, and the second corp retaliates by shooting up the company picnic of the first first one. The stage is set for the flavor of the whole campaign, and the PCs have a violent stage to step onto . . .

That worked so well that he decides to finish out the year just as randomly. The rolls are 62, 01, 75, 39, 51, 31: The corporate war is resolved. Technocorp, the loser, is rousted out of town by Datadyne, the victor. During the rest of the summer, Technocorp plots to recoup its lost profits. A robot air vehicle is programmed to crash into the office tower of Datadyne, which now holds a monopoly on the territory the two once fought over. However, it is shot down before it can impact the building, and debris from the crash hits a slum, causing a great deal of fire damage. The citizens, irate over slow response times by firefighters and paramedics afraid to enter their neighborhood, instigate a citywide riot. Technocorp takes advantage of the confusion to outfit a local gang with an experimental combat drug that proves so

addictive and pleasurable that it becomes a hit on the streets, saturating the city for months with combat-primed joyseekers. The police raid the main warehouse of the dealers of the new narcotic, and a stray smoke grenade starts a fire that kills dozens of innocents. In the political fallout that follows, with citizens distrusting cops and the government, Datadyne offers its services as "security analysts", and makes the elected officials an offer they can't afford to refuse. Within weeks, Datadyne is running everything, and Technocorp is out in the cold. Just an ordinary year in the cities of the future . . .

by Matt Riggsby

An earlier article ("Low Tech Economies", *Pyramid* #26) outlined why few people in low TL societies got rich from manufacturing and commerce. This article explains how people *did* go about getting rich: working the land and collecting taxes.

The specifics of this article are based on the Medieval European manorial and feudal systems. Parts, particularly those covering the rights and obligations of feudal landlords, will not apply to some settings (for example, ancient Greece or medieval Japan). However, the basic principles of the peasant economy hold true in many worlds, and may be applied to a broad range of traditional fantasy campaigns.

Peasants

The basic building block of the pre-industrial economy is the peasant. Peasants are farmers who live on what they produce; any surplus is sold (directly or indirectly) to an urban center. Although they appear only in the background of many adventures, these farmers form the majority of the population in any non-industrialized world and always appear around the edges of important events. They're poor and uneducated, but not necessarily hopeless or stupid. Most will have a good working knowledge of one or more crafts, and an intimate (and often very useful to adventurers) knowledge of the surrounding countryside. They can often hunt for their own food as well as growing it, can tend to animals, and maintain their own shelter. Each village will probably also have a part-time blacksmith with sufficient skill to make and repair farm tools - and simple weapons. Peasants won't be able to compete with skilled specialists in any field, but they can take care of themselves. They have to.

Peasants can also be effective at setting ambushes for small bodies of arrogant "heroes" who do them wrong. One of the earliest editions of TSR's ***Dungeons and Dragons*** game had an "Angry Villager Rule." It pointed out that an irate horde of ordinary people armed with torches and farm tools, no matter how unskilled, could overwhelm even the most powerful foes through sheer numbers. This is doubly true in ***GURPS***, where hit points are in limited supply, and a simple hand-made spear is (realistically) very deadly. Since peasants (like most people) don't want to die, they're usually docile, but they can be pushed too far.

Some peasants, known generally as *serfs*, may be "tied" to the land, legally obligated to work a field for their lord. The peasant working the land is not sold or exchanged along with the land itself, but his obligation to work the land is. This obligation places the serf lower on the social ladder than the free peasant, but there is often little practical difference aside from potential. A free peasant who can't afford to leave his land is no better off than one legally obligated to stay.

Peasants produce the food for just about everyone. Since there's little hard demographic data before the modern era, it is difficult to determine just how many peasants it took to support non-peasants, but most estimates hold that peasants made up from 75% to 95% of pre-industrial societies, depending on the specifics of the local agriculture. In addition to their role as food-producers, peasants usually perform compulsory labor for their rulers, usually in the form of work on lands directly owned by the lord: more farming, more animal tending, and the maintenance of roads and bridges.

Feudal Lords

Feudal lords are often regarded as professional soldiers, who provide military service to a higher lord in return for use of a piece of territory and its occupants. Most lords enjoyed such martial pursuits and actively promoted their image as warriors. Consequently, they spent a lot of time and money maintaining their arms and their own military readiness.

However, the role of the lord extended beyond their occasional wartime functions. They were consumers (eating well, keeping expensive horses, supporting luxury industry, and more), administrators of large farms, and often the embodiment of local law.

Some points sometimes overlooked: Lesser lords lived in homes overlooking their flocks and fields and were personally involved in deciding what to plant, how to care for the animals, and so on, even if they did none of the actual farm work. When manuals on farming began to appear late in the Middle Ages, they were written not for the peasants who did the actual work, (they were rarely literate, anyway) but for this audience of "gentleman farmers." Roman farming manuals were likewise written for wealthy villa owners rather than working peasants. Richer lords had too many holdings to administer them all personally, and even some not-so-wealthy lords left the day-to-day administration of their estates to assistants, but in either case, they made the fundamental decisions and set policies that made the difference between a healthy population and a starving one.

In addition, the lord was often the court of last resort in his domain. His exact role depended on the legal system in which he operated, but the lords were frequently called upon to settle disputes and mete out punishments for crimes in his jurisdiction. Time spent hearing cases and delivering judgments was paid for by plaintiffs and defendants, who gave the lord another source of income, and the peasants another expenditure.

Status among the lords varies. Rather than directly ruling a larger chunk of territory, (which is difficult to do efficiently anyway) a high-status lord was likely to subdivide his land and grant fiefs to lesser lords in return for military service. If laws allow, as they did later in Europe's medieval period, greater lords can accept monetary payment in lieu of service. In such a legal climate, a clever administrator could strike a good balance between fattening his coffers and keeping the jobs that needed doing done well. Campaigns in which the PCs must make such choices can provide a challenging diversion from the day-to-day chores of the exploring hero.

Land and Population (and the Royal Cashflow)

The absolute minimum farmland it took to support a Medieval English peasant was about an acre. This could easily be more for regions with poor soil, or perhaps a bit less for outstanding soil and good seed. However, most peasants were able to work more than the minimum amount of land. Two to three acres is probably close to the typical area that a poor-to-average peasant worked.
More importantly, crops weren't the only source of food. Most peasants had at least a few animals, which could be pastured on common land, or, in the case of pigs, left to forage in the woods. Also, as many monasteries discovered, a one-acre eel pond provided a lot more food than an acre of growing wheat - and a bit of variety on the table, as well. The value of such alternate food-supplies is difficult to measure, but this just means that the GM has a bit of room to nudge the numbers to where he needs them for his story. Peasants themselves took advantage of forest, swamp, particularly rocky patches, and other uncultivated land to gather nuts, mushrooms, and edible greens and to hunt

rabbits, birds, and other animals. Peasants living near bodies of water could also supplement their diets with fish, frogs and turtles. The same wasteland a peasant hunted and gathered in was the source for herbal medicines, building timbers, and other natural resources.

When determining a lord's income, the amount of land he rules is secondary to geography and available labor. Labor was in short supply during most of the Middle Ages, and there was little in the way of animal or mechanical power to replace it with. Regardless of how much land a feudal lord might have nominal authority over, his income was limited by what the peasants in his employ could cultivate. But, even increasing a fief's population won't necessarily increase the lord's income: Fields must be cleared of trees and underbrush before they can be tilled, a very labor-intensive process, and not all land is suitable for agriculture even once cleared. Since the best land is likely to be under cultivation already, immigrants to an already populated fief must often settle for inferior land. A constant law of diminishing returns plagues the landowner.

Taxes varied considerably from place to place and time to time.. Moreover, ancient tax laws required specific goods and services (a bushel of grain, three days of work repairing the mill, etc.) rather than a set percentage of the taxpayer's income, which caused the ruler's income to vary with the value of the goods he received. At any rate, ancient taxes probably took something like a tenth to a third of each peasant's total production and labor. With the income figures below, that suggests that a lord received from $15 to $50 per able-bodied peasant. However, since a sizable chunk of the populace will be composed of children and elderly adults, average income probably drops to $7.5 to $25 per peasant, with figures on the lower end being somewhat more likely. A landed knight with a moderate income of $1500 would therefore oversee a modest fief of somewhere between 60 and 200 peasants, just right for a small village or hamlet. The population of the lands of more important lords (Status 4+) can be calculated likewise, but note that such lords will also have nominal authority over 1d+1 or so lesser lords. If any of those lords are of Status 3+, they may have vassals of their own, and so on. Calculate the population of a fief as though its lord had relevant skills around 12 to 15. A lord with higher Administration or Agronomy doesn't necessarily rule more peasants; he's simply better at getting money out of what he has.

Feudal "Jobs"

The job table below is designed to reflect the realities of a feudal economy. They're a departure from the simpler table in the ***Basic Set*** in some ways, and should be considered an optional variant. First, the hand-to-mouth nature of peasant existence is not accurately reflected by the Basic Set's job table. Please note that all are treated as "freelance" jobs to represent the highly variable income of the positions. Although they both work within a clearly defined hierarchy, lords and peasants are exercising ancestral privileges to work the land they live on. They cannot lose their "jobs" without their own lord taking extraordinary measures to remove them. If the job descriptions below are in use, the GM may want to reduce income from other jobs by a quarter to a third to reflect how close incomes are to the cost of living.

Job	(prerequisites)	Income	Success Roll	Crit Fail
Poor				
Poor Peasant*	(Status -2 or less, Agronomy)	$75	PR	-1i/-1i,3d
Struggling				
Average Peasant*	(Status -1, Agronomy)	$150	PR	-1i/-1i,3d
Average				
Well-off Peasant*	(Status 0, Agronomy)	$275	PR	-1i/-1i,3d
Comfortable				
			Average of	

Minor Lord*	(Status 3+, weapons skills totalling at least 60)	$100 x (Status + Administration-3)	Agronomy and Administration	-3i
Wealthy				
Major Lord*	(Status 4+ and either Diplomacy 15 orweapons skills totalling at least 60)	$125 x (Status + Agronomy or Administration)	Average of Administration and Law	-3i
Prince/King*	(Status 6+)	$200 x (Status + average of Administration and Law)	Administration-6	

Service and Commuted Taxes

Any lord can be called up for military service or attendance at court. Terms vary from person to person, but most vassals could be called up for one to four month's service per year, with three being common. The vassal is not paid for this service; it is a debt to his superior. He must follow his lord's commands in the field and, for the most part, pay his own expenses, although extraordinary expenses (such as those incurred ferrying an army across a sea) may fall to the ruler who commanded the service. However, if the term of service for the year is up and the overlord wishes to continue fighting, the vassal is in a good negotiating position. He might continue fighting in exchange for money, but he may instead try to renegotiate the terms of his service. He might, for example, keep fighting in return for the right to levy particular taxes and tolls in his fief that are currently the lord's right to collect, increasing his own future income at the cost of the lord's. Again, good opportunities for clever roleplayers.

While a lord is away from his fief, its administration is likely to deteriorate. If a feudal lord simply leaves instructions for his followers and peasants, he may continue to make job success rolls at -4, with an additional -1 for every month he is away. Alternatively, he may appoint a trusted friend or retainer to keep an eye on things for him. In that case, the overseer's Administration or Agronomy skill is substituted for the landlord's. In either case, there is the possibility that those left behind will embezzle from their absent lord's income and holdings.

At certain points in history, higher lords have been legally permitted to accept monetary payments instead of military service. The GM may allow this as well, giving important lords a way of supplementing their income. The payment is, theoretically, enough to support a soldier in the field to serve in place of the vassal himself, about $1,000 to $2,000 per month of service for a low-ranking knight, depending on local law. Payments for more important lords may be higher. This lets the vassal stay at home and avoid the risk of death, and gives the lord an often much-needed amount of cash (and a professional soldier).

Clergy and Tradesmen

The third major part of European Medieval society, the Church, isn't addressed separately here. While he Church in Europe had a different power structure and a completely different political agenda from most of the nobility, it was indistinguishable from secular authorities when it came to economic function. Parish churches, abbeys, and cathedrals collected taxes and consumed income in the exact same manner as feudal lords. In fact, abbeys, amply endowed by donations from rulers seeking security in the afterlife, became some of the biggest landlords of the medieval period. So far as the "middle class" of tradesmen and merchants are concerned, they are vanishingly rare during this period. For more on the economic challenges they faced, see "Low-Tech Economies" in *Pyramid* #26.

Uncle Albert's Auto Stop & Gunnery Shop

Sonic Cannon

by S. John Ross

You've heard the rumors - at the 2047 Christmas Bloodletting in Lawton, Oklahoma, the first civilian use of practical sonic firepower screamed out into the tabloid nets. According to the reports, the Oklahoma National Guard had outfitted the duellists (both off-duty soldiers) with the guns as a holiday lark. Within two months, the denials ended and the guns went public - *if* you happened to be an Oklahoma citizen.

No more waiting! Uncle Albert's Has Sonic Cannon! They're available now in the United States, Texas, and most parishes in the Republic of Louisiana! Better strap on your earplugs, campers, 'cause Uncle Al knows that these little screamers will be tearing up the duelling circuit this fall! *Warning: Uncle Albert is not responsible for incidental damage to hearing, digestion, and delicate dental-work as a result of close proximity to sonic cannon-fire. We know our customers are responsible adults who put safety first in their deathsports and personal-defense planning.*

Light Sonic Cannon (LSC) - To hit 6, 1d damage, 2 DP. Cost $3,500, weight 450 lbs., 1 space. Area effect. 1 Power Unit per shot.	**Order RIGHT NOW and get an official Uncle Albert's first aid kit (a $29.95 retail value) for only $24.95!** *Limit 1 per customer.*
Sonic Cannon (SC) - To hit 6, 2d damage, 3 DP. Cost $6,100, weight 800 lbs., 3 spaces. Area effect. 2 Power Units per shot.	
Heavy Sonic Cannon (HSC) - To hit 6, 3d damage, 4 DP. Cost $9,600, weight 1,100 lbs., 5 spaces. Area effect. 3 Power Units per shot.	• *Military Sonic Cannon (MSC)* - To hit 6, 6d damage, 6 DP. Cost $22,000, weight 2,000 lbs., 8 spaces. Area effect. 6 Power Units per shot. *The Military SC is a restricted item, illegal for civilians.*

Sonic Cannon are energy weapons, projecting focused sound to damage their target. This makes for an accurate and powerful attack with little relative expense. Unfortunately, the destructive power of the beam degenerates *rapidly* with range.

SC damage breakdown works on the same four-inch scale as targeting modifiers. Within four inches, an SC does *double* the rolled damage. From four to eight is normal damage, from eight to twelve is half the damage rolled, from twelve to sixteen is one-fourth the damage rolled, and so on, halving for each further four inches and rounding down.

Beyond 8 inches, SC fire is all but useless when compared to weapons in the same price, weight, and space range. Within 4 inches, the sonic can rule the battle. As with rockets, effective use of the Sonic Cannon can depend more on the skill of the *driver* than the skill of the gunner.

Unlike lasers, sonics are not blocked by smoke or paint. They remove metal armor as if they were burst-effect weapons. In addition, any pedestrian or exposed crewman hit for at least one point of damage by a sonic cannon (even if the damage is absorbed by body armor), must roll 1 die. On a 5 or 6, he is affected as if by a Concussion Grenade! Mechanic rolls for Sonics are the same difficulty as Lasers.

Tight-Beam Modifications (TBM) - May be applied to any Sonic Cannon, doubling the price of the weapon. Sonics with tight-beam modifications have their damage halved at increments of eight inches instead of four. Power consumption is *doubled*. This brings the effective range of the SC to within the sphere of most vehicular combats.

Sonics Underwater - Sonic Cannon are useful underwater weapons (and are available in waterproof versions at the standard 25% price-hike). When fired underwater, Sonic Cannon are treated as if they had Tight-Beam Mods at no extra cost! Those *with* TBM have partial additional effect - damage is halved at increments of 12 inches. Unfortunately, sonic fire is less accurate underwater - subtract 1 from all "to-hit" rolls.

Sonic Cannon in *GURPS*

by David Pulver

These are low-tech versions of what will later become screamer weapons, firing a wider but more diffuse sonic pulse. Their short range limits their military utility, but bloody-minded regimes use them for "street clearing" riot control operations where their terrifying effects on exposed flesh are an effective "deterrent" to activism. Combat engineers find them useful as an alternative to bulldozer blades or demolition guns for destroying bunkers and barricades (and any enemy troops hiding in them).

Damage: Sonic cannon have the same special effects as ***GURPS Vehicles*** screamers -- see p. VE197. Even if no damage penetrates DR, GMs can require a HT roll to avoid being stunned: add +1 per 5 DR of sealed armor and

subtract 1 for every 6d damage (modified by range increment). Failure means the user is stunned for one turn times amount failed by.

Range: Sonic cannon have a special 1/2D range: damage is halved at 20 yards range and halved *again* every 20 yards after that. They have no maximum range *per se*. Acc does not drop to zero beyond 1/2D range. Double these increments if cannon has tight-beam modifications or is fired underwater (assuming its designed for such usage), triple increment if both applies.

Weapon Design Formula

Here's how to build sonic cannon using ***GURPS Vehicles.*** Note that in the ***Autoduel*** universe, no SC weaponry with an output lower than 160 kJ are currently feasible. The largest known Sonic Cannon was built for the Republic of Oklahoma's armed forces, and had an output of 1,400 kJ.

TL: 8.
Beam Output:
Cyclic Rate: Always 1.
Type: Crushing (Cr.)
Damage: Lethal for their output! B = 5
1/2D: Always 20 (with Tight-Beam Mods, 40)
Max: --.
Accuracy: Always 15.
Weight: Heavy for their output! B = 1.333
SS: Calculated normally.
RoF: 1
Power: These are real power hogs! E = 45.
Cost: Multiply cost by 0.5, or by 1.0 if the weapon has a "tight-beam" modification. Add 25% to cost if designed for underwater usage.

Here's how the weapons game out as ***GURPS Autoduel*** designs:

Weapon	Malf	Type	Damage	SS	Acc	1/2D	Max	Wt.	RoF	Cost	Power	TL
Light Sonic Cannon	Crit.	Cr.	6dX2	15	15	20	--	60	1	$9,000	7,200	8
Sonic Cannon	Crit.	Cr.	6dX4	20	15	20	--	120	1	$16,000	14,400	8
Heavy Sonic Cannon	Crit.	Cr.	6dX6	20	15	20	--	180	1	$19,000	21,600	8
Military Sonic Cannon	Crit.	Cr.	6dX12	20	15	20	--	360	1	$28,000	43,200	8

Designer and publisher James Ernest has single-handedly revived the micro-game. His venture, Cheapass Games, has caught the attention of a lot of people, with two Origins awards, a high-profile plug in *GAMES* magazine's *GAMES 100*, and hot sales across the country. We wanted to know a little more about James, so we invited him for a dialogue in the *Pyramid*. Here's what we got:

Pyramid (S. John Ross): What were you playing before playing became a vocation?

James Ernest: Pool. Poker. Blackjack. I'm not really a hobby gamer, though I confess to playing a lot of ***Magic: The Gathering*** when it came out. We were closely involved with WotC at the time; Dave Howell used to bring boxes of boosters over to our house.

Pyramid: Do you play Blackjack just for kicks, or do you practice any kind of count?

James: I'm learning a level 2 count called the Advanced Omega 2 System. Don't blame me, I didn't name it. It's in a great book called *Blackjack for Blood*, by Bryce Carlson.

Pyramid: And do you still play ***Magic***?

James: No, I don't play ***Magic*** any more . . .

Pyramid: What was your relationship with WotC?

James: We knew people who worked there. Dave Howell, Beverly Marshall, and by extension Peter and Cathleen. My wife, Carol Monahan, got a job there just after ***Magic*** came out.

Pyramid: Were you involved with the creation of any of the popular WotC games?

James: I've done some freelance copy writing for WotC, including three (yes, three) drafts of the ***Magic*** rules. After going through the blender of R&D and Editing, they're not really my best work. But I didn't agree with R&D on some of the fundamentals of the game's function.

Pyramid: Any notable anecdotes? Something signifigant you'd have done differently?

James: You mean, if I had it to do over again? Or differences with the rules lawyers?

Pyramid: Whichever you'd like to share.

James: Aha. Well, I didn't have the same solutions to the timing issues that the majority of R&D had. We were all just guessing, I suppose; the rules were incomplete as they stood. But I was out of line to try to subtly fix the game by tightening up the rules. Eventually I just gave up and wrote them a new trading card game.

Pyramid: Did it see the light of day?

James: It's being worked on by Top Men.

Pyramid: [*Sjohn nods sagely*]. Tell me about the origins of Cheapass. What inspired you to venture into it?

James: Frustration, probably. I had tried for about three years to get a job working for WotC; freelance, in-house, whatever. Except I wanted to design new games, and they didn't need that. For one thing, they didn't have a mechanism for producing volumes of new games. For another, they were pretty convinced that Richard could write everything they needed.

Pyramid: So you decided to start your own show . . .

James: Yeah. There are other factors; I know that the real money is in publishing, not in writing. It's true in any industry. And I had some ideas that WotC could probably never use, like the entire marketing structure of Cheapass Games.

Pyramid: You started out with a definite plan, with several games already designed, didn't you?

James: Yes, I started with multiple games. I spent the majority of 1996 working on the preliminary designs for Cheapass: Budgeting, production design, game mechanics, basic marketing strategy, and so forth. At the time, I was also finishing up the ***XXXenophile*** trading card game.

Pyramid: ***XXXenophile*** was yours? In retrospect, the design does feel like your style . . .

James: Yeah. Phil and Kaja and I and Carol were housemates. Phil decided to do the ***XXXenophile*** TCG and hired me to write it.

Pyramid: It's a unique design, both in and out of the CCG world . . . Dominos meets Marbles meets Sex meets . . . other things.

James: Yes. It was one of the things that convinced me that too much uniqueness is dangerous. Something other designers already know.

Pyramid: *[Nodding]* Many folks attribute it's lack of long-term success to lacking the basic cutthroat kid-with-the-most-toys-wins mentality of other CCGs.

James: There are a number of factors; it's hard to say. It was under-funded, it was X-rated, and yet not very hardcore; it was an original, cerebral mechanic; it didn't have rare cards (at my own insistence) . . . I hope some day Phil decides to do another game using that mechanic, because it's one of the games I really like to play.

Pyramid: We get a kick out of it at our house, too.

James: See? It's awesome. But you're right, it's not what people expected from a CCG. They are mostly "I put out my shit, you put out your shit, and they fight." With ***XXXenophile***, both players control the same field of cards at different times.

Pyramid: We also get plenty of kicks out of ***Kill Dr. Lucky*** at our house; tell us about that one.

James: ***Lucky*** was one of the first set of Cheapass Games, and it was the design we had the most faith in. So we relased it first, and we keep pushing it. The origins of the game are pretty interesting: I had the idea based on a story I wrote in college, called "The Butler Wore Black;" It was basically a mystery where everyone had an obvious motive. In Chapter one, the victim was still alive. By the end of a very short chapter two, the entire

assembled cast had conspired to kill him. So, driving over to Phil's house one day, I came up with the title of the game: ***Kill Doctor Lucky***. Like most of my best games, the title came first. I wrote up a quick treatment of it before that GAMA. Jordan Bojar, who worked for Slag-Blah at the time, mentioned it to a now-defunct gaming mogul who said "I'd buy that!" So, I took the next two weeks and finished it.

Pyramid: Was the original plan to sell it to the now-defunct mogul?

James: The original plan was to at least *pitch* it to him. But that never came to be. Then Phil made noise about buying it, and I finally decided to use it as my lead title for Cheapass.

Pyramid: How did you begin marketing Cheapass? Was it difficult to convince distributors and retailers that you were for real?

James: Apparently not. By the time we'd gone to a couple of trade shows, they were calling us. We have grown at a very respectable rate, always struggling to print as much as we were selling. So far I have only approached two distributors about carrying us; the rest felt the pull from below.

Pyramid: Any trouble with people not having a sense of humor about the company name?

James: I don't hear a lot from detractors, they just don't buy my games. There are a few boutiques who won't stock Cheapass Games (The WotC game center, for one), but I don't really care. I'm selling these games to a different market anyway.

Pyramid: They do well in comic shops as well as game shops, don't they?

James: Very well in comic shops. For one thing, I think the comic shops have better racks to display them. And their customers are looking for something cheap and small. Whatever the reason, comic shops sell Cheapass Games really well.

Pyramid: WotC won't stock them even now that they've won two Origins awards?

James: It's just that their buyer doesn't think Cheapass Games (Or ***Falling***, for that matter) fit the image of their store.

Pyramid: ***Dr. Lucky*** in particular, and Cheapass in general, seems to have very broad appeal. Do you have a core age group, or are you selling to both young kids and older folks?

James: I don't have any age numbers. I think the channels that carry Cheapass right now are hitting mostly the 15-30 market. But the mail orders I get over the web? No idea. I think I've started to hit the readership of *GAMES* magazine, which could be anyone. And didn't you buy Lucky for your grandmother?

Pyramid: Actually, I bought it for my mother and my mother in-law, and then my *mother* bought it for my grandmother, which is even better!

James: Awesome.

Pyramid: She went into a game shop on her own and asked for the Cheapass display. She told me about it later.

James: That rules. Did they have one?

Pyramid: They did have one, yes. Well-stocked. And here's an unforseen bonus feature: Both my mom and my

grandmother loved going to their favorite craft store to pick out macrame beads and things to use as playing pieces.

James: Cool.

Pyramid: Has the website been good for you? It's a well-designed site.

James: Thanks. It's been awesome, and business grows every month. I really shouldn't be telling you this, since part of our corporate image is that we're tiny and struggling . . . Anyway, yes, the web site brings in a lot of business. And it'd do five times better if we took credit cards, which one day we will.

Pyramid: What else does the future hold? More full-color? More games about undead fast food? Deluxe editions?

James: I don't know. Definitely two more *Friedey's* games. Probably more full-color card games. As for deluxe editions, I really don't know.

Pyramid: More from *Friedays?* That's a rich vein you're mining there: Menial Fast Food Work.

James: I know. And every crappy fast food restaurant is a 24/7 advertisement for my games.

Pyramid: Ever work those joints when you were young? I did *Hardee's* for a while . . . ***Give me the Brain*** is an accurate re-creation of the experience. And the co-workers.

James: I hear that from a lot of people. Who was it, ***Inquest***? Someone said the game could cause flashbacks. I only worked in a Baskin-Robbins in high school. Which might explain why the Friedey's colors are black and pink stripes.

Pyramid: What will the new sequels be like?

James: Well, I can't divulge too much, because, well, ***Stumpy the Cave Boy***. But I can tell you how things stand right now. Game number one is a board game called ***Graveyard Shift*** in which the objective is to recover the Brain from the Freezer. It's dark in there, so when you're in the freezer, you're blindfolded. The fourth one will be some kind of game called ***The Great Brain Robbery***, in which the entire crew decides it's time to get Brains for everyone, so they rob a train of medical supplies.

Pyramid: Stumpy the Cave Boy?

James: ***Stumpy the Cave Boy*** was a game we announced before it was done, and then pulled because it sucked. It was an awful experience, and one I don't want to repeat. So, these days I make sure to have a game in hand before I tell people much about it. Meanwhile, I keep thinking about ***Stumpy the Cave Boy*** . . . I even have a product code reserved for him. Because one of these days, I'm going to make it work! *[grins]*

Pyramid: I eagerly await your cave boy, then! Any other conceptual sequels?

James: We've thought of a lot of them over the years, but there's no telling which ones will get done. ***Get Out*** has a sequel called ***Bachelor of Science***. There's ***Choppin' Off Hedz*** and ***Where in Hell is Doctor Lucky***.

Pyramid: I know a lot of people would knock down doors and shell out the bucks, quick, for a ***Lucky*** Sequel.

James: And they might even buy a deluxe edition of the same game. But the sequel has to be good, or I'm not going to do it. I have too many good game ideas to print any more bad ones.

Pyramid: What's your favorite anecdote regarding Cheapass?

James: Let's see. The funniest thing recently was that a search engine on the internet sent me a message: "You have a site about guinea pigs, right?"

Pyramid: Good lord.

James: Well, I do mention Guinea pigs once or twice. Not enough times to stand out, mind you.

Pyramid: Do people send you variants?

James: People are always asking me to accept their game idea submissions. Once in agreat while I'm bored enough to read them, but I always regret it. If I do come across a good variant I usually repost it on my website. I don't know. I'm not that interested in collecting variations on a theme. Other people do that better than me. I'd rather be writing new games.

Pyramid: Tell me about your design philosophy.

James: This gets back to the idea of having the story before you have the mechanics. I know of a lot of designers who approach game design like this: "Hey, here's a great new way to move numbers around! Now we can just slap a good backstory on it and sell it!" I think that's backwards. For one thing, the story is what sells all of my games, so thinking about it last isn't going to help. For another, if the mechanics adequately reflect the story, it makes the rules easier to remember.

Pyramid: And, when you're adapting an *idea*, the mechanics will be more unique and interesting, anyway. You'll get stuff you wouldn't think of without a theme.

James: I think that's true. No one would have come up with the sight line mechanics in ***Dr. Lucky*** unless they were trying to recapture a sense of privacy. And they make perfect sense: You can't attempt a murder if anyone else can see you.

Pyramid: Exactly so. How many games does Cheapass put out a year?

James: We put out roughly a dozen in 1997. We're scaling back to six a year in 1998 and on. Actually, I think we're right on target for that, too. ***Starbase Jeff*** will be our last release this Fall, and it's number six.

Pyramid: ***Starbase Jeff***?

James: ***Starbase Jeff*** is another tile-building game like ***Safari Jack***. It was written by Jim Geldmacher and myself, and it's about building a space station. It's rather unique among tile-building games, because you play it for money. And it'll be out by November 1st.

Want to know more about James? Check out the *Cheapass Games Secret Website* at http://www.cheapass.com, or ask him yourself! He'll be in our chat room at 6PM CDT, this coming Tuesday (the 29th)!

by Chad Underkoffler

Art by Dan Smith

Duncan O'Devlin, young warrior and scout, regarded his handiwork. A scarecrow, stolen from the King's own fields, hung suspended from His Majesty's chandelier, a paper crown askew on its head. Duncan gave the noose a final tug, pat the effigy on the head and, satisfied, leapt to the floor. We'll see how the King likes that! *he thought, . . .* having his own palace violated as he's violated our valleys with his soldiers!

Wrapped up in his pride, Duncan failed to notice the door opening until it squeaked slightly. The Royal Wizard himself, Traven the Grim, was entering the room, his strides slow and steady, his nose buried in an ancient tome. He noticed Duncan, and stopped. The pair stared at one another.

Duncan felt a flush of hatred. Traven's wicked magic had been a constant terror to his kin - blighting their already spare fields, crazing their already sick livestock. Duncan let the rage churn in his heart, and let it bolster his strength . . .

The Royal Wizard's eyes narrowed, and he closed his book. A sneer rose up on his lips, and he lifted a gnarled hand to trace a spell in the air. Duncan felt the tingle of magic drawing near.

There wasn't much time. As Duncan fumbled for the hatchet at his belt, he drew upon the roiling power within him, shouting out the battle-cry of his clan, sending his rage right at the heart of the old sorcerer.

The scream tore out, striking Traven like a hammer and stunning him, his eyes wide and bloodshot, his hand frozen in mid-air, his lips stopped in mid-mumble. For half a second, Traven's face wandered in confusion, then fell slack as Duncan's hatchet buried itself in his forehead. Dead in an instant, the wizard fell to the floor.

The warrior ran past the sorcerer's body as a bell began pealing in the distance, triggered by Traven's death. More vulgar low-lander magic, *thought Duncan.* Feh. *With no time left to reach the secluded niche where he'd hidden his rope and grapple, Duncan ran.*

All was serene in the dining room. The King's effigy - a gift from Duncan and his people - swung mockingly in the sunlight slanting through the windows, and his Royal Wizard lay in a pool of blood on the flagstones. Amid the chimes of the bell, the boots of the Royal Guard grew louder, but Duncan was long gone.

Chi magic is rooted in two simple ideas:

1. A mage's power is applied to *himself* rather than the world around him, and
2. The "supercharging" of non-magical skills is the primary manifestation of the mage's efforts.

By expanding on the martial arts concept of *chi*, these ideas manifested as new form of magic for ***GURPS***. Chi magic

ranges from the subtle to the spectacular, and can be used alongside the existing magic systems in ***Magic***, ***Voodoo***, ***Celtic Myth***, and elsewhere, or as the sole magic system for a setting. There are parallels to some elements found in ***GURPS Martial Arts*** and, although that book can be helpful in running the Chi magic system, it's not necessary.

What is Chi Magery?

A Chi Mage has instinctive knowledge that mundane warriors must work decades to approximate. He needs spend only a few moments to call up his powerful life-force, *chi*, to boost his performance beyond mundane limits. By act of will, the Chi Mage is able to realign the flow of chi in his body to grant himself Advantages or obviate Disadvantages.

Chi Magery

50pts for 1st level, 65 pts for 2nd level, and 80 pts for 3rd level

You were born with an unusually strong life force. This *chi* is a form of magical energy constantly circulating within you. This power allows you to do things no one else can do, see things no one else can see, and know things no one else could know.

Chi Magery grants the following abilities:

- Your extremely potent life force is a balancing factor in your physical and mental well-being. You add your Chi Magery (CM) level to all HT and Will rolls.
- Your body efficiently recirculates and refreshes your chi, allowing you to recover Fatigue points at twice the normal rate.
- Your body has a keen "muscle memory" which makes it easy for you to learn difficult movements and physical routines. All time spent learning Physical skills counts double (point costs are unaffected).
- You are a born Master, and thus may learn Esoteric skills from the list in ***Compendium I***. Your level of Chi Magery adds to the relevant attribute for the purpose of learning Esoteric skills.
- You can focus your chi through your skills to perform incredible mental or physical feats! (see below).
- Due to your innate understanding of how your body, mind, and chi interact, you can realign and adjust the flow of energy in your body to gain Advantages or restrain your Disadvantages (see below).
- You can sense magic in use or recently used. The GM rolls vs. [IQ + CM] whenever you first see, touch, or come within 2 hexes of magic or anything enchanted, or any active magic.

You ***cannot*** draw on any outside sources of Fatigue (Lend ST, Draw Power, Powerstones, etc.) to power your chi-abilities. You are limited to your personal Fatigue (but see below, *Chi Magery & **GURPS** Magic Interactions*).

Special Limitation: Cannot use chi to enhance Mental skills, -10%.

Additional Cinematic Options: You may be able to learn Esoteric skills on your own as per self-teaching (sidebar, p.B83). You have access to the Chambara Fighting rules (p. CII71) or Multiple Attacks rules (p. CII72-74) if the GM permits them.

Chi Magery and Esoteric Skills

As a "natural-born" Master, the Chi Mage has access to the Esoteric Skills in ***Compendium I***, except for Ritual Magic (unless ***GURPS Voodoo*** is also being used in the campaign). However, some Esoteric skills have the following changes to their description for Chi Magi:

- In any prerequisite list, *Karate* or *Judo* may be replaced by *Boxing*, *Brawling*, *Sumo Wrestling*, or *Wrestling*.
- Add *Chi Magery and Combat Reflexes* as an alternate prerequisite set for *Precognitive Parry*.
- Add *Chi Magery 2+* as an alternate (to *Morphing*) prerequisite for *Shapeshifting*.

Focusing Chi to Enhance Skills

This ability is the core of Chi Magic. When Chi Magi focus their chi, they can execute feats impossible (or nearly so) for the average person. Some examples:

- Running full-tilt along the top of a 1"-wide sheer wall (Chi applied to the *Acrobatics* skill).
- Folding a lethal dagger from a sheet of paper (Chi *Origami*).
- Reading the lay of the land" to discern the cosmically-in-all-ways-best place to set an ambush (Chi *Tactics*).

Any skill that the character has studied may be enhanced to surpass its mundane limits through the focusing of chi.

> *EXAMPLE OF PLAY*: Duncan is running from the Royal Guard, who are gaining on him. He needs a distraction, something to slow the guards down. His player glances at Duncan's skill list and decides to go with Chi Axe Throwing (he keeps a supply of hatchets, and he uses that one a lot). He asks the GM if there are any street-lamps on this street, and if there are, if they are oil-lamps or some sort of magical light-producer. The GM says that there are brass oil-lamps along one side of the street, burning cheerily. The player grins. "As he runs past the lamppost, Duncan focuses his chi upon the hatchet in his hand. Two strides past the post, he throws it with force enough to slice right through the metal post. The idea is to send the burning lamp down in front of the guards."

Now it is up to decide the GM will decide if the effect is possible. If it is, then the roll is made (and energy accounted for) as outlined below. GM's should keep the following factors in mind when deciding if a proposed Chi feat is possible:

- **Appropriate Skill Choice:** Running quickly across the tops of enemy helmets is an acrobatic feat, so the skill used should be Acrobatics, even if the player (who knows his Running skill is 15 while his Acrobatics is only 12) proposes Running, instead. Also, some (rare) feats will be crude enough to be handled by an Attribute instead of a skill.
- **Dramatic Necessity:** The proposed feat should fit the tone of the game and the feel of the genre. Some proposed feats will be too silly - or even too graphically violent - for the game. The GM shouldn't hesitate to veto on the basis of style, and ask for an alternate course of action.

Even if the effect (or some haggled-over version of it) is permitted, the GM may levy any additional restrictions he sees fit, such as additional Fatigue costs, skill modifiers, and so on.

When attempting to focus chi to enhance a skill, the Chi Mage must take at least one turn to realign his vital energies. This doesn't necessarily require a Concentration maneuver - Chi Magi can run, jump, and even fight while calling on their powers. At the beginning of the turn following this internal "focus," the player rolls against the skill being enhanced, with a bonus equal to his level of Chi Magery.

Fatigue Cost: A minimum of 1d Fatigue must be spent per effect attempted, whether or not the roll succeeds. For every 2 points the Chi Mage succeeds by, reduce the Fatigue cost by 1 point (minimum 1). Recall that Chi Magi are limited to their personal Fatigue for power. If he lacks the necessary Fatigue to generate the effect, maybe there is a lesser effect, or the enhancement simply fails, or the effect ends before reaching its intended goal, or the Chi Mage may (if the GM allows it) burn Hit Points to cover the deficit.

Duration: The "spell" usually lasts just long enough to achieve the mage's stated goal (jump an obstacle, throw a rock, find magnetic north, and so on). Most uses of chi magic are short-term and ephemeral, but some long-term effects (such as purging poison from a wound) are also possible. Long "feats," especially those centered on conflict, are usually really a series of short ones to achieve a greater effect.

Chi-enhanced skills cannot be taught to anyone, they are magical improvisations upon the "theme" of the mundane skill. If a Chi-enhanced skill becomes formalized into an Esoteric skill (see below), it may then be taught to others.

> *ANOTHER EXAMPLE*: Duncan is in a bind. In a dark corner of a storeroom, he crouches. He's momentarily lost his pursuers, but they're all still in the area. What he needs, again, is a diversion. He sees a perfect set-up: the officer talking to one of the panting guards who had been pursuing him just moments ago directly under the chandelier. His eyes follow back to find the supporting rope, and - luck be praised! - it's easily within his striking range, with no obstructions. Unfortunately, he's down to his last hatchet . . .
>
> Duncan wants to cut down the chandelier without losing his hatchet. "What about a 'striking from a distance' thing?" asks Duncan's player. "My chi would flow into the hatchet, which would spray it across the room in axe-form to cut the rope." The GM disagrees; it sounds thin.
>
> Undaunted, the player asks, "What about a 'boomerang' sort of thing, where I throw it and it'll scale back, or ricochet to come back to me, or somesuch?" The GM mulls for a second, and gives it the thumbs up, if Duncan accepts an additional +1 Fatigue. Duncan's player gulps at that (Duncan's already tired), but agrees.
>
> Duncan throws the hatchet horizontally this time, instead of his usual vertical throw. The whirling axe swings in a wide arc, slices through the chandelier's rope - sending it crashing down on some guards, including the officer!- and continues the arc to return to Duncan's outstretched hand. One he has hold of it, he bolts out the back door of the inn, to freedom.

Formalizing Chi skills as New Esoteric Skills

If a character is consistently focusing chi through the same skill for the same general effect, he may wish to formally define it as an Esoteric skill. Perhaps all Esoteric skills began as Chi-enhanced skills: compare Stealth and Invisibility Art, for example. The player and the GM should work together to set the name, skill difficulty, prerequisites, skill description, concentration time, effects, and any additional requirements (Fatigue expenditure, acupuncture needles, moxa, etc.) needed for the skill.

It takes (50-P) weeks (where P is the level of the Chi Mage's "parent" skill) to develop a new skill in this manner. If the GM rules that more than one "parent" skill is involved, use the least favorable development time. Finally, the skill developer must meet the new skill's prerequisites!

> *EXAMPLE*: Duncan ends up using Chi Axe Throwing several more times over his few next adventures. He finds this chi-enhanced skill awfully handy, and decides to formalize it into an Esoteric skill. After some discussion with the GM, a skill description resolves: Boomerang Axe, Physical Hard. It has a prerequisite of Axe Throwing 12+ and either Trained By A Master, Chi Magery, or another appropriate Unusual Background. The skill allows the thrower to "call" the axe back either in flight or after it thunks into something, for 1d+2 Fatigue when *called*. Axes can only be called every (20-skill) turns. He may now use the skill reliably without haggling with the GM, and even teach it to any students he may collect.

The Realign Chi Skill: Ads and Disads

A Chi Mage with the Realign Chi skill can use it to perform significant and even permanent changes in the flow of his life force. In game terms, he can gain advantages at will, and obviate the effects of disadvantages. Both feats require a skill roll, time, fatigue, and the permanent expenditure of reserved character points.

Realign Chi (Mental/Very Hard)

Prerequisites: Autohypnosis 12+, Chi Treatment 12+, Meditation 12+, Chi Magery 2+

This skill permits a Chi Mage to perform dramatic realignments of his Chi beyond the "instinctive" level provided by the Chi Magery advantage. A successful use of Realign Chi can add or remove an Advantage or Disadvantage, temporarily or permanently.

Temporary Realignments: By expending 1d+2 Fatigue, Concentrating for 1d turns and permanently spending two reserved character points, the Chi Mage may add or remove the advantage or disadvantage of his choice. The value of the advantage or disadvantage is limited to a number of character points equal to his level with this skill (so, a Chi Mage with Realign Chi-10 could temporarily gain or ignore any advantage worth 10 points or less, or any disadvantage worth -10 points or less). The change lasts for a number of minutes equal to the Chi Mage's Will+1d. A failed roll has no effect, and the Chi Mage may try again. While under the effect of the realignment, the Chi Mage may not use his normal ability to enhance his skills.

Permanent Realignments: By undergoing often-grueling personal rituals, a Chi Mage may use his Realign Chi skill to permanently add or remove advantages or disadvantages. The normal cost in character points must be paid, and the character must have all the necessary points available in reserve. The process requires a successful roll against Realign Chi, and a period of total focus on the process lasting (100/Will) days, plus 1 day per character point value of the ad or disad. Any interruption will ruin the process and require the mage to start again. The exact rituals required are left to the GM to describe, but they may involve anything from severe and regular Fright Checks to permanent injury or scarring (they may even be *pleasant* if the GM rules it appropriate).

Naturally, the choice of advantage or disadvantage to be gained or removed is subject to GM approval and GM/Player haggling. Some are clearly inappropriate (spontaneously gaining a Dependent, for example), others will depend on the GM's tastes and the nature of the campaign.

Chi Art & Chi Craft - Magical Investiture

A true Master of Chi Magic can use his abilities to create wondrous objects, investing some of his own power into non-living things:Trumpets that play themselves, rabbits' feet of Luck, rings of Compulsive Generosity, manacles that restrain Chi Magery...

To invest an object with an ability, the Chi Mage must have Chi Magery 3 and *both* the Realign Chi skill and the appropriate Artist or Craft skill (for the thing that will be invested) at a level of 20+. The Chi Mage must make the item himself. Throughout the creation of the object, the Chi Mage will be infusing his own Chi into it.

In ***GURPS*** terms, a Chi-invested item is Super Equipment (p.SU68). Use all standard rules for determining the item's point-cost, what happens when such an item is stolen and so on.

The creation of an invested item requires the normal cost in time, equipment and materials to make a mundane version of the item in question, plus an additional time, in days, equal to the point cost of the final item.

During each day of the item's construction, the mage must roll vs. Will. If successful, the day's work counts toward the required total. If not, not. The work needn't be continuous - a Chi Mage can keep a project at home to work on during times of peace, for instance.

Chi Magic & *GURPS Magic* Interactions

Aura: The glowing "halo" of a Chi Mage would most probably be very close to the skin, tight, dense, and have sharp edges rather than hazy. If a Chi Mage knows that his aura is being viewed, he may very well try to use Chi Disguise to alter its appearance.

Divination: When a Chi Mage is the subject of a divination, scrying, Seeker, Trace, Invisible Wizard Eye, any sort of magical observation, he should get an [IQ + CM] roll to realize it.

Magic Resistance: At the GM's option, Magic Resistance could help protect against many of the Esoteric skills like Pressure Secrets, Kiai, Invisibility Art, Hypnotic Hands, Hand of Death, etc.

Mana Levels: Chi Magic effective in all except No Mana areas (and some Esoteric skills may work there, GM's option). No other effect.

Powerstones: Chi Magi cannot use a powerstone to help power Chi-enhanced skills or Esoteric skills. However, at the GM's option, a Chi Mage might be able to make a [Will-4] roll to drain the mana out of a powerstone to replenish his lost Fatigue.

Sources of Inspiration, Brain Fertilizer, and general Good Stuff

The basic notion of "supercharged" skills as magic comes from *Hedge Magic*, by S. John Ross. Other ***GURPS*** writing that influenced this article includes:

GURPS Magic, Steve Jackson
GURPS Martial Arts, C. J. Carella
GURPS Supers, Loyd Blankenship
GURPS Vikings, Graeme Davis
GURPS Voodoo, C. J. Carella

Other Resources:

The GURPSNet Mailing List
rec.games.frp.gurps [USENET]
Many fine books that appear on my Good List

GURPS Undead Outtakes

By Sean Punch

I have often been accused of having undead on my fevered mind. This isn't entirely accurate, but like all rumors, there is a grain of truth to it. Animated corpses and spooky spirits *fascinate* me -- not because I'm a fringe spiritualist who thinks the undead are a "window on the soul," nor because I'm a Jolt-drinking freak [1] in a black tee-shirt [2] who thinks "dead guys kick butt," but because I find it incredible that almost every culture on the planet has a fascination with dead things. Color me an amateur anthropologist, I guess.

The trickiest thing about writing ***Undead*** was the research. I wrote it as a staff writer, on a strict internal deadline, which gave me about two weeks to make my notes. I simply did not have the time to read forbidden texts found moldering in Balkan tombs, interview old sea captains about ghost ships, etc. Instead, I played the secondary-source game: I read works on eschatology, magic, psychic phenomena, etc., and pieced together a picture, discarding any contradictions that couldn't be explained away. I also watched two scary movies a night for two weeks and had vivid nightmares the whole time I was writing the book (so there *is* a "fevered" angle to it).

The other challenge was to avoid coming across as an affected twit. Let's face it: ***Undead*** is a game book. People are going to be using it to stock their fantasy dungeons, or to create Bad Things for their ***Horror*** campaign, or to give their black ops something to blast. The last thing I wanted to do was write a dry academic piece that droned on about angst and damnation! To this end, I settled on a mix of one part factual background to one part practical campaign advice to two parts mechanics and statistics. That seemed to balance rules against everything else (in fine ***GURPS*** tradition) without losing sight of more subtle issues, like why zombies eat brains.

I originally planned to present a sample character for each of the twelve undead archetypes in the book. There was a crunch for space, though, and since most gamers know how to create characters, we decided to chop some of the sample undead instead of hacking on the rules. Below are five of these: Baseka is a mummy thug, Tom Snee is an undead Jack-the-Ripper type, the skeleton guards are standard fantasy cannon fodder, Gwynnyth is an attempt to illustrate that vampires don't have to be angst-ridden, and the toxic soldier is that green-haired guy from **DOOM.**

Sample Mummy: Baseka (225 points)

Age unknown; 5'8", 150 lbs.; bandage-wrapped corpse wearing an unusual collection of rings, amulets and other jewelry.

ST: 22 [20] **IQ:** 10 [0] **Fatigue:** 22

DX: 14 [45] **HT:** 12/17 [20] **Senses:** 10

Speed: 6.50 **Move:** 5 **Will:** 10

Dodge: 7 **Parry:** 8

Advantages: Combat Reflexes [15]; Mummy [125].

Disadvantages: Bloodlust [-10]; Intolerance (Living) [-10]; Overconfidence [-10].

Quirks: Likes to attack from behind; Rarely speaks; Scavenges the belongings of tomb robbers, especially jewelry; Wears fake amulets. [-4]

Skills: Area Knowledge (Tomb)-14 [8]; Axe/Mace-15 [4]; Brawling-15 [2]; Intimidation (fr. ST default)-16 [2]; Stealth-15 [4]; Tactics-12 [8]; Throwing-13 [2]; Wrestling-15 [4].

Languages: The Unknown Tongue (native)-10 [0].

Equipment: Amulets and jewelry; Fine heavy club (cr 4d+2).

Description: Baseka is a mummy created by a forgotten ancient culture. He dwells in an underground tomb complex with several other undead (mostly mummies and ghosts), and spends a lot of his time patrolling its corridors, looking for grave robbers to smash with his club. He feels that the living are lesser beings, fit only to be crushed; undead characters will get a better reception if they can figure out a way to communicate with him.

Baseka is brutal but not stupid. He was a trained warrior in life and employs intelligent tactics. He knows that any damage he sustains in battle may be permanent, so he avoids direct confrontations. While one of the ghosts in the catacombs is a wizard who knows some Healing spells, ghosts have a tendency to fade away. Baseka usually picks off stragglers with surprise attacks, but will coordinate his undead cronies in an ambush if faced with a large party of grave robbers.

Since there isn't a great deal to do in a tomb, Baseka has taken to collecting the belongings of tomb violators and examining them carefully. To date, he has found several bigger and better clubs, the odd healing elixir and several books that he can't read. He has also acquired a lot of jewelry this way, and wears it to disguise his amulet.

In a ***GURPS Fantasy*** campaign, Baseka would be a good inhabitant for a mysterious crypt that predates the Banestorm (and human presence on Yrth) by millennia. With minor changes (add Illiteracy and Primitive, change language to Egyptian), Baseka could also be used in a ***Horror*** game.

Sample Revenant: Tom Snee (150 points)

Age 31; 5'11", 160 lbs.; foul, rotting corpse of a burly man, wielding a knife.

ST: 15 [20] **IQ:** 10 [0] **Fatigue:** 15

DX: 13 [30] **HT:** 15/18 [20] **Senses:** 10

Speed: 7.00 **Move:** 7 **Will:** 12

Dodge: 7 **Parry:** 6

Advantages: Revenant [75]; Strong Will +2 [8]; Toughness (DR 1) [10].

Disadvantages: Berserk [-15]; Bully [-10]; Obsession (Hunt down those who betrayed him); Sadism [-15].

Quirks: Hates traitors; Likes sharp, shiny knives; Makes sick jokes; Never backs down from a challenge; Never forgets a quarrel. [-5]

Skills: Area Knowledge (East End)-13 [6]; Brawling-14 [2]; Carousing-15 [2]; Fast-Draw (Knife)-14 [2]; Intimidation (fr. ST default)-13 [6]; Knife-15 [4]; Streetwise-12 [6]; Wrestling-14 [4].

Languages: English (native)-10 [0].

Equipment: Fine large knife (cut 1d+2, imp 1d+2).

Description: Tom Snee was a cheap hoodlum in life. He made his living as a footpad and was part of a loose-knit gang that worked London's East End. A violent man, he frequently killed his victims. This led to his being shunned by his fellow criminals, most of whom had no desire to get involved in murder. Aggravated by this ostracism, Tom turned his knife on his mates, who in turn sold him out to the CID to protect their hides. Tom was killed when he charged an armed officer and was shot like a dog.

Three months later, Tom got up and brushed off the dirt. He stole a razor-sharp knife from a butcher and resumed his killing spree. This time, his focus was specifically on those who betrayed him.

Tom has been wandering the East End for a year, now, killing his betrayers one at a time - along with anyone else who happens to get in the way. Fortunately for London, Tom will probably go back to the grave and on to Hell once he has slaughtered the last of his former colleagues. Unfortunately for the CID, they have been ordered to investigate the new rash of mysterious murders in the East End . . .

Tom is intended for use as a NPC foe in a Victorian ***GURPS Horror*** campaign. A few modifications would allow him to be used as the revenant of a cheap crook in almost any setting.

Sample Skeletons: Guards (-26 points)

The following are skeletal warriors that may be encountered as the guards of a necromancer. All have these basic statistics:

ST 10 [10], DX 14 [20], IQ 8 [0], HT 11 [10].

Speed: 7.25, Move: 6.

Advantages: Combat Reflexes [15].

Disadvantages: Bad Temper, Bloodlust or Bully [-10]; Skeleton [-86].

Plus one of these equipment and skill packages:

Archer: Heavy leather armor; PD 2, DR 2 (4 vs. missiles, beams and impaling attacks); light encumbrance.

Dodge: 7, Parry: 7 (knife).

Skills: Bow-15 [8]; Brawling-14 [1]; Fast-Draw (Arrow)-15* [1]; Fast-Draw (Knife)-15* [1]; Knife-15 [2]; Wrestling-14 [2].

* Includes +1 for Combat Reflexes.

Weapons: Large knife (cut 1d-2, imp 1d-2); Regular bow and quiver with 20 arrows (imp 1d-1, SS 13, Acc 2, 1/2D 150, Max 200).

Heavy Swordsman: Heavy leather armor, medium shield; PD 5, DR 2 (4 vs. missiles, beams and impaling attacks); light encumbrance.

Dodge: 7, Parry: 9, Block: 8.

Skills: Brawling-14 [1]; Broadsword-16 [8]; Fast-Draw (Knife)-15* [1]; Fast-Draw (Sword)-15* [1]; Knife-14 [1]; Shield-14 [1]; Wrestling-14 [2].

* Includes +1 for Combat Reflexes.

Weapons: Broadsword (cut 1d+1, cr 1d-1); Large knife (cut 1d-2, imp 1d-2).

Light Swordsman: Heavy leather armor, small shield; PD 4, DR 2 (4 vs. missiles, beams and impaling attacks); light encumbrance.

Dodge: 7, Parry: 9, Block: 8.

Skills: Brawling-14 [1]; Fast-Draw (Knife)-15* [1]; Fast-Draw (Sword)-15* [1]; Knife-14 [1]; Shield-14 [1]; Shortsword-16 [8]; Wrestling-14 [2].

* Includes +1 for Combat Reflexes.

Weapons: Large knife (cut 1d-2, imp 1d-2); Shortsword (cut 1d, imp 1d-2).

Spearman: Heavy leather armor, small shield; PD 4, DR 2 (4 vs. missiles, beams and impaling attacks); light encumbrance.

Dodge: 7, Parry: 9, Block: 8.

Skills: Brawling-14 [1]; Fast-Draw (Knife)-15* [1]; Knife-14 [1]; Shield-14 [1]; Spear-16 [8]; Spear Throwing-14 [1]; Wrestling-14 [2].

* Includes +1 for Combat Reflexes.

Weapons: Large knife (cut 1d-2, imp 1d-2); 3 spears (one-handed: imp 1d; hurled: imp 1d+1, SS 11, Acc 2, 1/2D 10, Max 15).

Sample Vampire: Gwynnyth (300 points)

Age 18; 5'9", 141 lbs.; a tall, pale woman with a sword, usually clad in armor.

ST: 21 [10] **IQ:** 11 [10] **Fatigue:** 21

DX: 14 [45] **HT:** 16 [10] **Senses:** 15

Speed: 7.50 **Move:** 7 **Will:** 11

Dodge: 7 **Parry:** 8 **Block:** 8

Advantages: Dominated Vampire [200]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Luck [15].

Disadvantages: Dread (Wild rose); Glory Hound [-15]; Impulsiveness [-10].

Quirks: Always armed; Collects swords; Likes to bend the truth when she speaks; Loves a good party; Makes wisecracks in battle. [-5]

Skills: Armoury/TL3-10 [1]; Brawling-15 [2]; Broadsword-16 [8]; Carousing-17 [4]; Fast-Draw (Sword)-14 [1]; Fast-Talk-10 [1]; Gambling-10 [1]; Intimidation (fr. ST default)-17 [4]; Shield-16 [4]; Tactics-10 [2]; Wrestling-14 [2].

Languages: Anglish (native)-10 [0].

Innate Spells: Body of Air-16; Shapeshifting (Wolf)-16.

Description: Two years ago, a shadowy man called "Michael" held a gladiatorial competition on the Tredroy docks. The top three warriors were to be chosen for his private guard, while the rest would be paid a month's wages and dismissed. Gwynnyth was chosen to compete, accepted gleefully and placed second overall. Along with the two other champions, she was escorted to Michael's estate in the countryside and told that Michael would join them in the morning. In the meantime, they were given plenty to eat and drink.

When they awoke, it was *still* night and Gwynnyth had more than a hangover; in fact, she was no longer quite herself. Michael appeared shortly - along with the zombified competitors from the docks - and revealed that he was a vampire. He quietly informed the three mercenaries that they were to be his undead lieutenants. Although some part of her wanted to protest, Gwynnyth found it all too easy to accept her new role. She has been serving Michael ever since.

Gwynnyth is a ***GURPS Fantasy*** character. She was worth 100 points before becoming a vampire, and costs Michael 45 points to dominate. She is typical of what a new PC vampire might look like, and would be an acceptable character in an all-undead campaign.

Sample Ghoul: Toxic Soldier (-20 points)

A sergeant who has been transformed into a ghoul by a nerve-gas test gone wrong. The Army didn't round him up and he wandered off the base. He's presently unequipped, but if he finds weapons lying around, he *will* use them!

ST 12 [10], DX 11 [20], IQ 8 [0], HT 16 [10].

Speed: 6.75, Move: 4.

No armor; no encumbrance.

Dodge: 6, Parry: 7 (Brawling).

Disadvantages: Ghoul [-70].

Skills: Brawling-11 [1]; Driving/TL7 (Jeep)-11 [2]; Guns/TL7 (Pistol)-11 [1]; Guns/TL7 (Rifle)-13 [4]; Hiking-16 [2].

Sample Zombie: Palace Guard (-50 points)

A typical undead "spear carrier" that might be found guarding the gates of an evil wizard's stronghold.

ST 13 [20], DX 13 [30], IQ 7 [-10], HT 11/16 [10].

Speed: 6.00, Move: 4.

Scale armor; PD 3, DR 5 (inc. Toughness); medium encumbrance.

Dodge: 4, Parry: 7.

Advantages: Toughness (DR 1) [10].

Disadvantages: Any *two* of Bad Temper [-10], Bloodlust [-10] or Bully [-10]; Zombie [-110].

Skills: Brawling-14 [2]; Fast-Draw (Knife)-13 [1]; Fast-Draw (Sword)-13 [1]; Knife-14 [2]; Polearm-15 [8]; Shortsword-14 [4]; Wrestling-13 [2].

Weapons: Halberd (cut 2d+4, imp 2d+3, imp 1d+3); Large knife (cut 1d+1, imp 1d); Shortsword (cut 2d-1, imp 1d).

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[1] I prefer coffee. No comment on "freak."
[2] Actually, I *am* wearing a black tee-shirt.

Secrets of The Ine Givar

by Andrew Moffatt-Vallance

Art by Ray Lunceford

The Ine Givar, the principal anti-Imperial terrorist group operating in the Domain of Deneb, began as an early expression of the tensions that building in the latter years of the 3rd Imperium. In the ***GURPS Traveller*** universe, these tensions continue to grow; in the original timeline, they culminated in a shattered Imperium, when Dulinor assassinated Strephon in 1116. In both, however, the Ine Givar were ahead of their time, striving for democratic reform and dramatic change. They became frustrated at attempts to reform peacefully, and turned to violence. This is their story.

History of a Movement

Ine Givar was born on Rhylanor in 948, to noble parents. His family were minor nobility - political "placeholders" in the hierarchy, of a kind that became increasingly common in the latter Imperium. Much of his childhood was spent traveling, brought along on make-work "fact finding" missions that were the lot of the petty noble. Young Ine Givar saw world after world, and saw many oppressive regimes that the Imperium had turned a blind eye towards. These travels were to have a profound influence on him, leaving him a deep feeling of disillusionment regarding the Imperium.

He enrolled in the University of Rhylanor in 966, to study political science. A talented student, he gained his Bachelor's degree with honors in 970. However, he had become increasingly involved in politics during this time, writing essays, giving speeches, and gradually building up a group of dedicated followers. He gained his Masters with honors in 972 and his doctorate in 974.

Rather than move into a comfortable job in the bureaucracy, he chose to devote his life to agitating for peaceful democratic changes to the "corrupt Imperial system". This rapidly gained him much official disfavor, but did not prevent him from building up a subsector-wide following. With the coming of the Third Frontier War he was detained as a "threat to security" in 980 and died in custody in 984.

Normally, other than a few minor protests, this would have been the end of the matter. However, the authorities had not taken his lover, Kisla Famia, into account. Born into the lower classes of Rhylanor, her great-grandparents and grandparents had been executed during the psionic suppressions and she bore an almost fanatical hatred of the Imperium. She also had an enormous talent for media manipulation. With the end of the war and her own release in 987 she launched a massive media campaign to "uncover the truth about Ine Givar's death". Eventually this bore fruit, and in 990 an official inquiry was convened.

Over the course of the inquiry, the evidence mounted that Givar had been subjected to systematic brutalization and torture. Naturally his supporters expected that those responsible would be brought to justice. However, when the inquiry finally delivered its finding in 992, it reported that Givar's death was a "regrettable accident caused by his failure to co-operate fully with his jailers".

In late 992, his supporters organized a mass rally outside the Rhylanor Naval base (where Givar had been imprisoned) to demand those responsible be called to task. It is uncertain just what happened, but during the demonstration a detachment of Imperial Marines opened fire on the crowd. In the resulting chaos and panic at least 700 demonstrators were killed.

> *"The Empire speaks of honor; where was their honor when they murdered Ine, where was their honor when they let his killers go free to ply their vile trade, where was their honor when they slaughtered these innocents? Where is their honor when they allow despots and tyrants kill and*

torture and maim their citizens? They have no honor!"

"Ine believed in democracy, Ine also believed that democracy could be achieved by peace and negotiation. They do not want peace, they do not want democracy, they want only power and blood. If they want blood, I say let them have blood! They tell us that the path to democracy is through patience and negotiation; they tell us now is not the right moment. I say the time for negotiation is over, the moment for democracy is now!"

-From Kisla Famia's declaration after the Rhylanor massacre

From this point on, the Ine Givar movement abandoned peaceful change and moved to terrorism to achieve their aims. Their first action was the dramatic bombing of the Imperial Naval Intelligence headquarters on Rhylanor. This was typical of the audacious actions that became their trademark under Famia's leadership. Within five years there were Ine Givar cells on most worlds within the Domain of Deneb, within sixteen they had become the dominant anti-Imperial movement in the Domain, and had cells extending as far as Capital itself. The movement's early high-water mark came in 1020 when Famia masterminded an assassination attempt on the entire Imperial family. The attempt failed, but it did leave Emperor Gavin's younger brother Prince Elmor dead.

Around 1035, a shift occurred in the movement's leadership. Famia was by now 96 years old and her health was failing. She stepped down and Ine Givar's son Natise took over the movement's leadership. Natise Givar had both his father's charisma and his mother's tactical and administrative abilities. He had also nursed a lasting hatred over his father's death. Under his leadership, the movement grew in both strength and efficiency. Natise planned for the long term, contacts were made with the Zhodani and Sword Worlds; and their support was gained. Other terrorist groups were absorbed or eliminated and the organizations targets came to include the megacorporations that supported the Imperium.

In 1067 a leadership coup replaced Natise with Votan Gamiilash, one of the movement's "young Turks". Under Gamiilash the movement abandoned most of its activities beyond Corridor sector, concentrating almost exclusively on the domain of Deneb. Gamiilash changed the movement's focus; under her leadership it became far more tied to and dependent on Zhodani and Sword Worlds support.

It was under Gamiilash that the movement struck its first purely civilian target. In 1075, Ine Givar operatives smuggled a fusion warhead into the city of Kashar on Zivije. The resulting blast caused over 5,000,000 casualties (including 2,800,000 dead). It was as a result of this atrocity that the Zhodani instigated a bloody coup in the movement and replaced Gamiilash with a committee headed by Wardn Sortin in 1077.

This committee structure was to dominate the movement's leadership for the next 40 years. Under the committee, the Ine Givar became little more than an extension of the Zhodani and Sword Worlds intelligence services.

The Ine Givar were a major factor in the Fourth Frontier War. Ine Givar guerrillas tied up many Imperial troops that could have been better employed at the front and provided invaluable intelligence to the Outworld Coalition. It was Ine Givar agents who discovered that Imperial Naval Intelligence had compromised the Zhodani's deep space base between Yres and Menorb and lead to the Battle of Two Suns (however, it did not prevent the Coalition from loosing the battle).

After the Fourth Frontier War, the Ine Givar curtailed their activities and rebuilt their strength for the next war. They continued to strike at Imperial targets and fostered unrest on a number of worlds. As the Fifth Frontier War drew nearer, their activities increased. Guerrilla cadres were established and on Efate and Ruie they moved to almost open warfare. With the outbreak of the Fifth Frontier War in 1107, the Ine Givar sprung into action; the carefully groomed

Guerrilla cadres tied down many Imperial troops in the opening stages and provided bridgeheads on a number of worlds.

The war, however, would prove to be a major setback for the movement. As the Coalition campaign faltered, the Ine Givar cadres were left stranded and destroyed. Much of the movement's strength was lost in the latter stages of the war, and the movement felt deeply betrayed by the Zhodani.

In 1114, Rojel Nuguma seized control of the movement. He greatly reduced the movement's ties to the Zhodani and Sword Worlds and set about rebuilding and replacing the lost cells. However, the movement had nearly been destroyed in the Fifth Frontier War and it took a long time to recover. The movement did not resume activities until well after the war's conclusion.

Organization

The Ine Givar was originally an outgrowth of a political movement, and that heritage is reflected in its organization. The movement is directed by Central Committee, a group of thirteen individuals headed by a President.

In theory, the Central Committee is the supreme body and the President merely chairs it, with all decisions made collectively. However, in reality, the Ine Givar have never actually conformed to this theoretical pattern. For the greater bulk of its history, the real seat of power was the President, with the Central Committee acting as a debating forum for the more powerful factions within the organization. Even during the so called "Committee Period" (1077 to 1114) the Ine Givar were effectively controlled by the Zhodani and Sword Worlds intelligence agencies.

Directly beneath the Central Committee are the Quadrants. Each Quadrant consists of (typically) four Imperial Subsectors. Each Quadrant is run by a Committee of seven, charged with carrying out the directves of the Central Committee. Each Quadrant divides itself into a military and a political arm, independent of the one other but answering to the Quadrant Committee. For reasons of security, no person in the political arm is supposed to have any knowledge of the personnel of the military arm and vice versa. However, this is not always possible. Both the military and political arms divide themselves into a number of Districts (the actually size of an individual District is dependent on a number of factors, but most cover between four and six worlds), though the military and political districts do not necessarily correspond.

The political arm is responsible for organizing all forms of political agitation, from student demonstrations to workers strikes; it is the most "visible" face of Ine Givar. The military arm is divided into four distinct types: Main force units (guerrilla cadres), Direct action units (terrorists), Intelligence units (deep agents planted for intelligence gathering), and Special operations groups (*agents provocateur*).

In order to minimize the security risks, both the military and political arms are organized along a "cell" structure. Under this organization, each cell is a completely independent unit. Only the cell leader has any outside contact within the Ine Givar, and that contact is typically limited to a single superior, and the cell leaders of any subordinate cells. This structure minimizes compromise in the event of capture, and has remained relatively constant throughout the Ine Givar's existence.

Aims and Philosophy

The driving aim of the Ine Givar has always been to reform the Imperium into a democratic society. This goal underlies all of the organization's aims and demands, and their simple manifesto:

"We demand an end to the nobility. We demand that the Imperium remove all corrupt and oppressive local governments. We demand that the Imperium restrains the predatory economic activities of Imperial corporations, and we demand that the Imperial security apparatus be replaced with a system not riddled with corruption and brutality."

Adventure Possibilities

Characters may encounter the Ine Givar in a number of ways. There are Imperial security agencies seeking to finish them once and for all, other dissident groups seeking to end their domination, and the bloody power struggle going on within the organization's own ranks. The players might be recruited by a zealous Imperial agent seeking to destroy "this nest of vipers" despite official apathy; or they might be recruited by one of the factions in the Ine Givar power struggle. And if friends are lost to an Ine Givar bombing, they'll have entirely *personal* reasons to find the movement.

A Friend In Need

by Phil Masters

Art by Ashley Underwood

This is a scenario for either a horror RPG which can involve some pretty blatant, up-front monsters, or a superhero game which can take a touch of horror. It is adaptable for either of these genres; the opposition can be adjusted for different power levels, although normal-human investigators will need more subtlety than full-power superheroes in the later stages. It is set in the present day, but could be moved backwards or forwards in time with a few adjustments to the props and furniture.

The Opening Scene

The PCs can be introduced to this mystery in a number of ways: Patrolling crime-fighters and other night-prowlers can chance to wander past Penelope Milliner's apartment when screams and sounds of violence are heard, psychic "sensitives" could note a sudden burst of activity and horrific imagery from that direction; heroes who work with the police, and who are known to be good at dealing with such things, could be called on by the authorities; others could just pick the story up from contacts, or the press. If none of the characters can be brought onto the initial scene quickly, let them hear an account from the policeman who was first to arrive (and have them see police photographs). Either way, they should be given a graphic set of descriptions.

Late one night, following obvious signs of trouble (screams and crashing noises), the police or heroes arrive at a second-floor apartment in a moderately well-off part of the campaign's favorite city. If they look from outside, they'll notice a light in one window (the lounge -- on some kind of perception roll. they'll note that the light fitting must be swinging around wildly). The main door to the apartment is shut but not locked (and access through windows need not be difficult, if a PC tries it); anyone smashing the door down should later be asked why they did so. Inside, the room is, literally, a bloody mess.

There is blood everywhere. Several items of furniture have been thrown around and smashed; the same goes for a human body, still just about recognizable as such. This should be good for some Sanity loss, Fright Checks or whatever in some games; PCs should certainly be encouraged to roleplay reactions to the scene. A young woman is cowering against one wall, her face buried in her hands, moaning softly; she, too, is covered in blood. Closer investigation will not reveal much. The woman is not, herself, physically hurt at all.

However, she is evidently seriously traumatized, and will be totally incapable of communication for some time; if only for that reason, urgent medical attention is indicated. She is in her mid-20s, and dressed in ordinary night-clothes -- cotton pyjamas and a robe. Telepathy or high-level psychological skills will find her condition is genuine, and severe enough to defeat any immediate attempts to probe or question.

The apartment is - or was - equally ordinary, conventionally decorated and reasonably comfortable. The cause of the carnage is (effectively) no longer present, but GMs who can make such things work should play up the atmosphere, with every shadow a possible threat, and the light still flickering as the bulb swings back and forth. There is a youngish cat lurking under a small cabinet in one corner of the sitting room, which is almost as traumatized as the woman; it will hiss at anyone who discovers it (good for a brief scare). If anyone can communicate with animals, they will find its thoughts hopelessly confused, full of the smell of human blood.

Background (GM Only)

All she wanted was to talk to her cat...

As the PCs (or police) will soon be able to establish, the woman, who is also the occupier of the apartment, is named Penelope Milliner. She is a management trainee with an insurance company, age 24, and unmarried. The deceased is not recognizable, but a damaged wallet can be found, allowing him to be identified as Gordon Lloyd, aged 39, separated from his wife -- and Ms Milliner's manager at work. The PCs will have to put much more effort into piecing together the story leading to the death.

It begins when Penelope Milliner was at university (studying history). A boyfriend persuaded her to volunteer, for pocket-money. to help with some experiments on artificial augmentation of the human psi facility. These experiments were not very successful. and the program soon ended, but for one or two brief moments, with the aid of banks of machinery, Penelope experienced flashes of telepathy.

After graduating, she found a job and settled down. She was living alone, except for a pet kitten, Prospero. She became fascinated by Prospero's mental processes, as many cat owners do, and she began to wonder what it would be like to contact his mind. She was bright, and her ex-boyfriend had given her some notes on her psionics research when she expressed curiosity. The electronic equipment used at the university wasn't available, but there was an alternative; some success had been achieved using drugs, including LSD.

Penelope wasn't a drug user, but she had known one or two; she used these contacts to obtain a small supply. For some weeks, she tinkered with chemicals and self-hypnosis, recreating the effect she had felt under the machines, before giving the whole thing up as a foolish and expensive failure.

She was half-right. She had not gained any real psi talent from her experiments; however. she had set up a link between herself and Prospero. Furthermore, all the chemicals she had fed to the cat had affected him.

Then came the night when Lloyd, her boss, took her out to dinner after she had put in a long stint of overtime to dear a backlog. To her embarrassment, he got drunk and made a pass at her. She brushed him off, then, later, he knocked on her door. He had followed her home, and he repeated his pass.

Her disgust and rage flowed through the unconscious psychic link to Prospero, along with a lot of psionic energy. The power transformed the small cat, building on its feline genetic template. A gigantic, misshapen monster killed Gordon Lloyd; then, as Penelope retreated into shock, the energy ebbed, and the monster changed back into a small, terrified cat. However, the process might happen again at any time; this is what the PCs must stop.

Investigation

There are several lines that the PCs can take through this adventure, many of which can give them some advantage in the final show-down. It is just possible they can avoid the reappearance of the monster, and quite easy for them to unintentionally induce it. Incidentally, unless the PCs intervene, the police will see that Penelope Milliner receives adequate medical treatment, then put her in the most secure available area of the local police station, as they become highly nervous about the mystery killer.

Investigating the Apartment

If the PCs have official backing, or can obtain permission, Penelope Milliner's home, and the gruesome remains there, can be subject to forensic examination. The police will, of course, do the same thing. but perhaps a little slower than a skilled and properly-equipped PC.

Some clues might emerge. First, Lloyd was killed by something with strength far beyond the human, and big claws and teeth, but no body parts seem to be missing. Second, straightforward tests will show that the deceased had alcohol in his bloodstream -- enough to take him well over the legal driving limit. (Ms Milliner will also show far lower levels

of blood alcohol if tested, but no other detectable drugs.) And lastly, *very* detailed examination (with large minuses to applicable skill rolls) might show minuscule traces of LSD in the back of one drawer in the apartment's bedroom. (But no more; Penelope used all her purchases, and threw away all her notes on her experiments).

Investigating the People

Penelope Milliner and Gordon Lloyd will seem, to any investigation, quite unremarkable. If anyone asks, or makes a good "conversation" skill roll or such while talking to their colleagues, it may emerge that Lloyd was something of a lecher, especially when drunk, while Ms Milliner was not at all interested in him. (She struck people as quiet, not a partying type, but not cold or anti-social.) The fact that they had both recently been working late for various good practical reasons is a matter of common knowledge; so had a number of others, but not on the fatal evening.

PCs who use "streetwise" skills or contacts are unlikely to turn much up, unless they are *very* lucky, persistent, or clever, in which case they might find someone who can say that a girl of Penelope Milliner's general description was asking after LSD on the streets months ago. (But discovering this would probably mean asking specifically about drugs, and few initial clues in the scenario point in that direction).

Friends and colleagues will describe Penelope Milliner as an average-bright, middle-class office worker; close friends will know, but not automatically mention, that she had a few slightly weird, unconventional acquaintances, but she had grown away from them. Discovering that she was involved in an unsuccessful psionics research project while at university will be hard, as only friends from that period know it, and they might well have forgotten -- it was a very minor incident.

Questioning Penelope Milliner

Ms Milliner will be sufficiently recovered from her shock to answer questions by noon they day after the killing, though she will seem glassy-eyed and numb. She will state that she had worked late on the previous evening, had dinner -- with Lloyd, they happened to finish work at the same time -- then went home. Her memories of the death are, she says, unclear; there was a knock at the door, she went to answer it, and the next thing she recalls is some kind of monster, which she can't describe, rampaging round the apartment, killing someone. If asked *specifically*, she will day that Lloyd made a pass at her over dinner, but she brushed him off. She can remember no more than that. Characters who can read body language or voice intonation will have difficulty -- she's still nearly in shock -- but they should eventually decide that she's being honest.

It is important to note that emotional stress will produce a series of extreme reactions from Ms Milliner, starting with increased withdrawal from the conversation, followed by hysteria, at which the transformation of Prospero to the monster becomes possible at any moment.

If she is specifically asked about her LSD purchases, Ms Milliner will be very evasive, first denying the facts, then saying "It was a silly thing from my university days, I've given it up now; I prefer reality." Pressing harder will soon trigger the return of the monster.

The Cat

The police, and quite likely the PCs as well, will mostly forget about the cat found at the scene of the crime. If it is ignored for long enough at the time of the initial discovery, Prospero will eventually recover enough to flee the next time a door is opened. If it doesn't get away, the police will eventually get hold of a cat basket, and leave it in the apartment for an day or so (with some food and water) before finding a neighbor who will take it in. If it gets away, it will eventually return, and hang around the apartment for a while until someone looks after it. The GM can manipulate the details of all this so as to have as many or as few innocent bystanders around at the time of the second transformation as the style of the game requires. (More for blood and suspense, fewer for less horrific straight fights.) If anyone tries probing its mind with psionics, magic, or whatever, all they will find is a confusion of memories and odd images; this is only to be expected, although the confusion might be deep enough for a smart telepath to find it odd.

Telepathy on Penelope Milliner

Paranormal investigation of Penelope Milliner's mind will encounter a sudden problem; although much of it is as open as any normal human brain, everything relating to this incident is behind a massive block. This could be suspicious, or it could be put down to trauma. It might be broken down by sheer telepathic power, but this would be traumatic for the subject, which might put ethical PCs off; in fact, it would also trigger Prospero's transformation to the monster, leading to the final scene. If this happens, the telepath will become aware of a massive flow of psychic energy to some unknown destination.

If any PCs have exotic "past-viewing" powers such as psychic retrocognition, the GM can rule that the manifestation of the monster generated a great deal of psychic "static," limiting the power's usefulness.

Final Showdown

It is virtually certain that the transformation of Prospero the cat into the monster will eventually be triggered again; if the PCs don't cause it, an over-zealous policeman will. If and when this happens, Penelope Milliner will say, with a kind of hysterical calm, "it's coming -- and it'll kill anything that stands in its way." She will then collapse into a withdrawn state, as reports come in of carnage across town.

The creature's only thought will be to get from wherever it is to her location, and to destroy anything that is causing her emotional stress. Unfortunately, it is powerful, has only animal intelligence, and is not at all subtle.

Superhero-level PCs can give it a serious fight, as can well-armed normals (depending on how powerful the GM chooses to make it), but more indirect reactions may be indicated. Fighting it hard enough to slow it down may be necessary, especially if city crowds have to be cleared from its path. Note that it will transform back into a domestic cat if and when it is completely convinced that Penelope is safe and not threatened by anything, and it has a psychic link with her. Tranquilizing her will eventually lead to this, but the effect will not be immediate, and continued fighting will keep it angry and uncertain. One risky-seeming but legitimate tactic, which the police will not approve, is to let it reach her, or take her to it. Once it can guard her directly, it will at first be very nervous and "aggressively defensive," but it will eventually calm down and transform. Skilled use of illusions or trickery might help with many of these tactics, but the creature becomes angry if it is confused. Hurting Penelope Milliner will make it very angry; hopefully, PCs will not resort to the (admittedly effective) idea of killing her.

Once the monster is suppressed, and assuming that Penelope Milliner survives the incident, a long-term solution will be required. Unfortunately. there are no easy and humane answers here. (Note that killing the cat will also kill the woman.) Scientists with a knowledge of biology and psionics can work to break the psychic link, but this should be a tricky project. Meanwhile, Penelope Milliner will have to be kept, preferably lightly sedated all the time. There could be legal complications; morally, she may be guilty of culpable negligence, but would any case stand up in court? She has family and friends who will argue with any attempt to restrain her too brutally, although she will accept the need for some kind of restriction. Meanwhile, Prospero should probably be kept in a reinforced cell. A criminal might be foolish enough to kidnap both woman and cat, hoping to use the monster as a pawn. This monster can become a recurring menace in any campaign.

The Monster

The monster should be statted up, under any game system, as something that will, at the very least, give all the PCs together a very tough battle. In fact, normal-human PCs should probably only hope to slow it down and distract it; in such games, the PC objective should be to resolve the problem in time to avoid heavy loss of life. In superhero games it should be possible for any PC to simply immobilize the monster with one entangle or grab, and it should be able to withstand several hits from the most powerful hero.

The monster is the physical manifestation of all Penelope Milliner's darkest urges, her anger, fear, and hurt, overlaid on the biogenetic patterns and fighting instincts of a hunting cat. Physically, it is larger than human, semi-bipedal, and

hunched, with a feline look. It has claws, fangs, and incredible strength and vitality, powered by a large reserve of psionic energy. It can also use this more directly, to generate a heat-induction effect, which it can wrap around itself to get rid of grabs or entanglements, or throw as a blast. It has very high mental defenses; in fact, psionic attacks feed its reserves, allowing it to throw more, stronger blasts. It is far faster on its feet than a running human being. It is not subtle, but it has animalistic cunning; if it is being attacked at range, it will use cover.

Its only concern is to defend Penelope Milliner from hurt or fear; so long as she is frightened or angry, it will be very aggressive. It assumes that attacks on itself imply threats to her. If it senses that she is calm, and it can detect no threats, it will eventually calm down; the psionic energy will ebb, and it will transform back into a small, domestic cat, which will stand confused for a while, then try to run away.

One crucial point to remember is the psychic link between the monster and Penelope Milliner. Each is generally aware of the other's current mental state and geographical location; furthermore, each feels any pain experienced by the other. Most important, if either dies, the shock will certainly kill the other. PCs should be encouraged to guess this, and it can be a serious problem for them in a fight.

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*Note: This scenario first appeared, in a slightly different form, in issue 2 of the now-defunct magazine **The Last Province**, in December 1992.*

"I Drank What !?"

Pre-Industrial Poisons, by Lisa Steele

Poisons are the weapon of the weak, the cowardly, and the vengeful. In the early days of medicine, a mysterious death was as likely to be blamed on a poison, curse, or even elf-shot, as on the normal frailties of life. Before the advent of food safety laws, diners were as much at risk of botulism, parasites, and salmonella, as of intentional poisoning. Dramatic poisons are just that - mysterious brews that take effect instantly, or linger in the body waiting for the second or third stage to active them, or slowly take effect while the hero searches desperately for the antidote. Realistic poisons are rarely instantly fatal. The following is a list of common poisonous materials, found in an American or European pre-industrial setting. Those interested in realistic poisons, for game scenarios, may want to consult wilderness survival manuals, herbals, and first aid books. Most will have short discussions on natural hazards, their symptoms, and remedies.

Animal Hazards:

Fish - There are eight common species of poisonous fish which are generally found in tropical Pacific waters. Poisoning generally occurs by ingestion. Symptoms begin in 10 to 30 minutes and include burning of the throat, abdominal pain, nausea, and vomiting. This is followed by ascending paralysis, hypotension, difficulty breathing, bradycardia, and death by respiratory failure.

Insects - only one species of beetle (Cantharis vesiatoria) is common to an American/European climate. It contains a potent ingested or skin contact poison. In small does (less than 1 mg), it is a traditional aphrodisiac. 10-120 mg will produce nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain, severe hypotension, convulsions, and death by respiratory failure.

Scorpions - there are several species common to the southern European/Mediterranean and American dry climates. The venom is a clear neurotoxin which produces nausea, vomiting, restlessness, fever, convulsions, coma, and cyanosis leading to death. The venom of Buthus Austalis (North Africa) remains virulent when dried. Generally, the scorpion's sting is merely intensely painful, not fatal.

Snakes - most dangerous snakes prefer warm, dry climates, but a few may be found in European regions. Some well known types include:

Cobra (Africa, India, Pacific) - the venom is a potent neurotoxin which causes nausea, vomiting, ascending paralysis, coma, convulsions, and death by cardiac/respiratory failure. The African cobra is capable of spitting venom at its victim's eyes.
European viper (Europe, North Africa) - this snake is found in dry rocky country. Its venom causes local pain/swelling, hypotension, abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting, and (uncommonly) death.
Rattlesnake (American) - its venom causes local pain and swelling. Hypotension, abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting occur over the next 2-12 hours. This may end in death by circulatory collapse.
Sand viper (Sahara) - this snake can sometimes be found buried in the sand and has a venom similar to a rattlesnake's.

Spiders - most venomous spiders reside in tropical

climates. The Black Widow commonly inhabits bathrooms and cellars but its bite is rarely fatal unless the victim receives multiple bites or is in poor health. Symptoms include nausea, vomiting, cramping muscle pain in the extremities and chest increasing over time which may last up to 36 hours. The Australian funnel web spider has a bite which causes localized pain, muscle cramps, numbness radiating from the wound, delirium, bradycardia, hypotension, and death within 2 (children) to 12 (adults) hours.

II. Mineral Hazards:

Arsenic - acute poisoning (over 120 mg) results in hypotension, jaundice, violent abdominal pains, burning stomach pains, vomiting, diarrhea, cold clammy skin, weakness, convulsions, death by cardiac failure. Chronic poisoning results in paralysis, loss of sensation, burning pains in hands and feet, nausea, vomiting, abdominal cramps, anemia, weight loss and hypertension.

Cyanide - acute poisoning results in immediate unconsciousness, convulsions, and death by respiratory depression in 1 to 15 minutes. Chronic poisoning results in dizziness, weakness, lung congestion, hoarseness, loss of appetite, weight loss, and mental disturbances.

Lead - chronic poisoning (.1g absorbed) results in muscle and nerve degeneration, abdominal disturbances central nervous system disorders, anemia, characteristic gum discoloration, pallor, jaundice, loss of appetite, constipation, hypotension, irregular pulse, and irritability.

Mercury - chronic poisoning (.1g absorbed) results in metallic taste to food, abdominal pain, vomiting, diarrhea. Total kidney and bladder failure within 1 to 14 days after ingestion.

III. Plant Hazards:

There are a wide variety of poisonous plants indigenous to Northern Europe and the United States. This list is but a sampling of the most infamous.

Baneberry - poisonous parts are shiny black, red, or white smooth berries, roots, and sap. Toxic dose can be as little as 6 berries. Causes severe gastroenteritis, vomiting, diarrhea, dizziness, shock, tachycardia, delirium, visual hallucinations, cardiac failure within hours. The root is sometimes used as a remedy for catarrh and the black berry's juice, mixed with alum, yields a black dye.

Belladonna (Deadly Nightshade) - poisonous parts are sweet cherry sized purple/black berries, bitter tasting leaves, and roots. The roots are most poisonous. The leaves and berries less so. An adult can eat 2-3 berries without harm, six berries are normally toxic. Causes fever, tachycardia, pupil dilation, difficulty speaking leading to complete loss of voice, skin flushed/dry/hot, amnesia may occur. Cardiac poisoning begins in 2 to 4 hours, reaching maximum effect in 8 to 10 hours. Symptoms may persist over 2 to 3 weeks. The plant is sometimes used as a narcotic, diuretic, sedative, antispasmodic, and for certain eye diseases.

Black Locust - poisonous parts are the bark, leaves, and seeds. Causes anorexia, nausea, hematemesis, diarrhea, dullness, depression, bradycardia, coldness of limbs, marked pupil dilation, and respiratory distress. Effects occur in days or weeks.

Bleeding Heart - all parts are poisonous. Causes trembling, staggering, convulsions, labored breathing and death within hours.

Curare - (native to India and South America) poisonous part is the bark. Causes visual disturbances, progressive paralysis, violent convulsions, and death from respiratory poison within minutes.

Cyclamen - poisonous tuber. Causes blood poisoning (hemoglobinuria) within hours.

Death Camas - poisonous onion-like bulb fatal at 1 gram. Causes excessive salvation, muscle weakness, bradycardia, hypotension, cold sensation, nausea/vomiting, diarrhea, stomach pain, difficulty breathing, visual disturbance, coma, and death within hours.

Destroying Angel - poisonous white mushroom 20-30% fatal in adults at 30g for adults.. Rare in North America, common to Central Europe. Symptoms occur in three distinct stages. First, developing in 6 to 24 hours, causes dry mouth, nausea, vomiting, sharp abdominal pains, diarrhea (often bloody) and shock. After the first 24 hours, often a false recovery for up to 4 days. The third stage begins with a recommencement of abdominal pain, and symptoms of liver and kidney failure leading to death in 7 to 10 days. Permanent brain and liver damage may occur in survivors.

False Hellbore - poisonous herb fatal at 1g. Its taste is described as sweet at first, then bitter and acrid leaving the tongue tingling and numb. Reputed to be a common medieval blade and arrow poison. Causes salivation, severe vomiting, profuse diarrhea, stomach pain, general paralysis, spasms, shallow breathing, bradycardia, cold sensation, convulsions and death in hours.

Foxglove - poisonous leaves containing several powerful cardiac affecting toxins. Causes nausea/vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain, headache, irregular pulse, tremors, and convulsions. Prolonged skin contact may case a rash, headache, and nausea. Cardiac poisoning begins in 2 to 4 hours, reaching maximum effect in 8 to 10 hours. Symptoms may persist over 2 to 3 weeks.

Hemlock - toxic in general, especially the leaves, fruit, and bitter tasting seeds with a mousy odor. Its toxin loses its potency when dried or cooked. Causes burning sensation, vomiting, diarrhea, trembling, lack of coordination, pupil dilation, muscle weakness, paralysis, cold sensation in limbs, bradycardia, convulsions, coma, and death by respiratory paralysis within hours. Its leaves are sometimes tragically mistaken for parsley, its roots for parsnips, and the seeds for anise seeds. Children have fallen ill using whistles made from its stem.

Jimpson Weed - a toxic coarse herb; 4-5 g can be fatal to a child. Causes exaggerated thirst, pupil dilation, dry mouth, red skin, nausea, tachycardia, headache, hallucinations, delirium, convulsions, coma, and death. Amnesia may occur. Cardiac poisoning begins in 2 to 4 hours, reaching maximum effect in 8 to 10 hours. Symptoms may persist over 2 to 3 weeks.

Monkshood - toxic roots and seeds, fatal at 2g of root. Causes burning sensation, nausea/intense vomiting, diarrhea, muscle weakness, spasms, bradycardia, respiratory paralysis, dim vision, convulsions, and death within minutes to days. The roots are occasional mistaken for horseradish or celery and the leaves for parsley.

Nightshade - several related species with toxic berries. In several species, the berries are most toxic when unripe and green. When ripe, they can be eaten by adults with impunity. Causes abdominal pain, vomiting, pupil dilation, diarrhea, shock, circulatory/respiratory depression, cold sensation, pupil dilation, paralysis, numbness, and death. Cardiac poisoning begins in 2 to 4 hours, reaching maximum effect in 8 to 10 hours. Symptoms may persist over 2 to 3 weeks.

Red Elderberry - toxic seeds and root. Causes nausea/vomiting, diarrhea, dizziness, and respiratory failure through cyanide poisoning. Seedless berries may be used safely as a jam.

Rhubarb - toxic leaves. Causes severe irritation and corrosion of the mouth and gastrointestinal tract resulting in nausea, violent vomiting, and bloody diarrhea, leading to potential kidney failure, headaches, backaches, difficulty breathing, internal bleeding, convulsions, and coma. Severe damage may occur in minutes.

Sweet pea - toxic seeds if eaten in large quantities. Symptoms vary by species and may include hyperexcitability, weak pulse, convulsions, permanent paralysis of the lower limbs, or death. Onset varies from hours to weeks.

Water Hemlock - toxic stem/root (when fresh) which is sometimes mistaken for parsnip. The root smells like parsley. Causes nausea, vomiting, salivation, diarrhea, tremors, violent intermittent seizures, respiratory failure, cardiac arrest within 15 minutes to an hour. The American species of Water Hemlock is rumored to be one of the most poisonous plants native to the United States.

Yellow Jessamine - toxic root and nectar. Causes respiratory depression, heavy perspiration, muscle weakness and rigidity, respiratory depression, convulsions, paralysis of motor nerves, dim vision, and death by respiratory failure. Cardiac poisoning begins in 2 to 4 hours, reaching maximum effect in 8 to 10 hours. Symptoms may persist over 2 to 3 weeks.

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The Missing Window

by Phil Masters

Art by Ashley Underwood

This is a scenario for a small group of superhero-grade RPG characters, or a group of hero-level characters with an investigative bent, which involves them in a mystery in a village in Cornwall, in south-west England. It assumes a fairly typical "superhero universe," with radiation-spawned mutants and a tendency to melodrama. However, it could be adapted for many other settings and types of game.

The basis for much of the scenario is some of the legends surrounding Glamis Castle, in Scotland. However, the setting has been moved to Cornwall for various reasons.

GM's Introduction

The PCs can become involved with these events in one of two ways:

- If they just happen to be visiting the area, perhaps on holiday, they could pass Pengarron and its Castle by chance. If any of them have appropriate mental powers, they might sense some kind of activity in the village -- perhaps from a distance? -- and be interested enough to investigate; otherwise, they just hear of a death in the area, and then meet someone (such as Dr. Wells) who tells them of the odd circumstances.
- PCs with backgrounds in medical science could receive a call from an old college friend, Dr. Wells. They remember him as a bright but not overly ambitious medic (details of the history are up to the GM); now he is apparently working as the local GP in a rural part of Cornwall. (It's quiet, with lovely scenery, and even if Wells wants to find a more glamorous job later in his career, it's good solid experience.) Wells remembers the PC, and maybe has seen their name in the papers; now he has a mystery on his hands, and perhaps they can help? (It may seem a long way to come on such a pretext, but Wells suggests that the PCs might also enjoy a holiday; he can put them up. Of course, if they are already in the area for some independent reason, and Wells hears of this, he needs less justification to make such an invitation).

The setting for events is a (fictitious) village named Pengarron, on the North coast of Cornwall, and the adjacent Pengarron Castle. A good guidebook will tell the PCs something about the place, such as that the village itself is moderately remote, and its couple of hundred inhabitants live mostly by fishing, with only a little tourist business. The area had a lot of tin mines once, but these are largely exhausted and uneconomic now. Pengarron Castle, on the cliffs next to the village, is actually more of a manor house; there was a "real" castle there once, but it was "reduced" by Cromwell's men after the Civil War (having been a Royalist stronghold), and only reconstructed as a home in the Eighteenth Century. As the locals will tell anyone who asks, the house has long belonged to the Trellaynes, a family who own a lot of land round Pengarron, and have a hereditary baronetcy.

The whole area is pretty in a windswept sort of way, with moors rising from the cliffs and a craggy coastline, and houses and "castle" built of local gray stone. The nearest town, Osvellen, is a few miles away along winding country lanes. The local people are polite, if taciturn (except after a night in the pub, the *Miner's Arms*, when they can become amiably loud), but the younger villagers find life boring, and spend as much time as possible in tacky clubs in Osvellen.

The "castle" is today in the hands of Sir Michael Trellayne, the twelfth baronet. Sir Michael is a bachelor in his late thirties, whose main concerns seem to be looking after the family estates. PCs who meet him will notice that he's quiet and apparently unemotional; successful use of conversation-based skills may determine that he's genuinely reserved and uncommunicative. He employs a number of locals, full or part time, for housekeeping and maintenance work, all under the supervision of Raleigh, an old employee of the family, who is in his late fifties.

The mystery that the PCs discover is as follows. Old Mrs. Dangerton, who was a housekeeper up at the castle for years, has just died. No-one's too surprised at that she was in her eighties, and had been going a bit senile this last year or so. Dr. Wells was with her at the end (mostly alone, although a nurse and a couple of her neighbors were often around), and has signed the death certificate, which says "natural causes," but he isn't really happy with his own diagnosis. (If the PCs have far to come, he'll have found an excuse to have the body examined by a pathologist, and it'll be in the mortuary at the small hospital in Osvellen; otherwise, it'll be moved from the old lady's cottage to an Osvellen undertaker's mortuary a day or two after the death.) The reason for his unhappiness is that Mrs. Dangerton was actually ill with influenza, but she died when her heart gave out, despite the fact that her heart was, in his expert opinion, the strongest organ in her body (and he'd been treating her for years). Furthermore she had all the symptoms of fever, but her temperature dropped to normal hours before the death -- almost as if she was beating the 'flu. (Forensic Medicine or other medical skills at good levels can confirm some of this from the body and Wells' records.)

Then there was the way Mrs. Dangerton talked on her deathbed: "I've heard fever patients before, and senility, but this was, well, too coherent; and yet it didn't quite make sense. *I won't tell them,* she kept saying, and *no, I'd never tell, I never have.* And then, right at the end, there was *he's your cousin, but you're worse than he'd ever be.* Earlier -- well, she had been rambling then. *I knew,* she said, *even when I was a girl; I saw the missing window, you know. And the seventh, she* kept saying, even in her lucid moments, *he was the real seventh.* You know, this is a pleasant enough little village, but anywhere can have some funny secrets. I'd just like to get to the bottom of this. . ."

. . .All of which should give the PCs something to think about. Initial enquiries can go from there.

Rumors

The PCs may turn up some of the following facts, in approximately this order:

1. Mrs. Dangerton worked at the castle for years -- longer than anyone can remember. The Trellaynes were always supposed to be very fond of her, and she and Raleigh got on well enough. She wasn't rich; no-one profits from her death, or seems pleased by it.
2. The Trellayne house can't have been a happy place for her to work -- "Glum crowd, they Trellaynes. Never enjoyed their money." This all seems to be associated with the Castle and its occupants having a rather dark image, and there are tales of ghosts. However, don't play the villagers as superstitious rustics; they are country people, but they watch TV and read the papers and think of themselves as sensible. If the PCs seem too interested in ghost stories, at least one young villager will feed them a long, gory ghost story culminating in the horrible deaths of a party of tourists, or offer them a guided tour of "haunted spots" (about thirty totally unremarkable locations) for "very reasonable prices."
3. Anyone asking about Sir Michael will be told he's "a real old misery, but then, all the old folk say that all the Trellaynes are like that". However, older villagers may say that he seemed "normal enough when 'e were a kid" -- it must have been the experience of his parents' deaths that made him so.
4. The Trellaynes may be congenitally gloomy, but Michael's father, Sir Christopher, the eleventh baronet, is remembered by the villagers as being a rather more wild character, much given to strong drink and womanizing. Those stories are old enough to be treated as a joke now, but anyone from the Castle staff will get annoyed with people asking about them. ("The past is people's own damn business!")

Ghost Stories

PCs may wish to pursue the "ghost story" question, in which case they can (eventually) find local folk-lore enthusiasts who can tell them the old story.

"The tale was that the sixth baronet -- Sir Roderick Trellayne, back in the Eighteenth Century -- he was a wild one.

And one night, his poor wife was telling him off for gambling and drinking with his cronies. *Damnation, woman* he said, I'll *finish my game of cards, though the devil damn me to eternity!*

"Well, that ain't the kind of thing a man should say. As the poor woman left the room, a dark stranger entered it, and sat down at the gaming table. Then there was a clap of thunder, and the room itself vanished, leaving the wife staring at a blank wall where the door had been.

"Mind you, they say if you look at the Castle late at night, you can still see the window of that vanished room, with a candle burning in it, and maybe hear Sir Roderick and his friends, trying to finish his game with the Devil. . ."

Hopefully, even mystically-inclined superheroes will find that a bit hard to swallow, although they might be interested in the background data. Anyway, if they ask about the story more than once, they'll meet a local history enthusiast who'll tell them it's double rubbish. For one thing, Sir Roderick didn't vanish; his grave is in the village churchyard, with his dates (1737-1788) on the headstone. For another, the story is a gross slander; all the histories say that Sir Roderick was actually a good, well-regarded squire, who helped the local mining industry modernize in the early days of the Industrial Revolution.

What's Behind It All..

Mrs. Dangerton was murdered (surprise!) by Raleigh (the butler did it!), but the method was unusual and the motives go back centuries. The story is of potential interest to mutant superheroes.

Sir Roderick Trellayne, the sixth baronet, was a clever, honorable man. He did indeed work to help the local tin-mining industry; most significantly, he traveled abroad, to study foreign mines and geological science. If a PC studies the details of his life, a Geology Science roll (or similar) might allow someone to recognize the names of some of the places he visited -- as sources of radioactive minerals today. Other research, and a Medicine or Biology roll, might identify the cause of his death, from the accounts, as cancer.

But the radiation did more than kill him, it affected his genes. History says that his first child was still-born (something quite commonplace for the age, so it hardly gets mentioned in the sources); his second child, a son, was the ancestor of the present baronet. Actually, the first son was born alive -- *and still is alive.* He was a hideously deformed mutant, with phenomenal vitality, energy nullification powers, and immunity to aging. To save the family name, Sir Roderick had the child hidden, but he couldn't bring himself to order it dead, even had that been easily achieved.

The child -- the rightful seventh baronet, of course -- was locked in a room, which was then concealed, and only a few faithful family servants knew of it. However, rumors inevitably got out; to defuse their effects, the family deliberately encouraged the "game with the devil" story. The room where the seventh baronet, known only as John, is kept, is hidden within the thick walls of part of the old "real castle," now incorporated into the house. It has a small window, which can only be found by careful inspection from above, but, rarely, a light from there may be seen at night, as Mrs. Dangerton glimpsed in her childhood.

Today, the only people who know of "John" are Sir Michael and Raleigh. The Trellayne heir is traditionally told on coming of age -- hence the family's habitual air of depression. Raleigh, as a faithful servant, helped tend to the prisoner. Mrs. Dangerton also assisted with this; when she started to go senile, Raleigh feared that she might say too much, and killed her.

How? Well, that's where the second part of the family shame comes in. None of the known Trellaynes inherited John's "monster" genes, but they *do* carry other mutations. These are mostly latent, and usually grant only limited psychic powers at best (something else that makes the family unhappy -- unreliable telepathy can give an unpleasant view of human nature without being very useful). However, Raleigh is the illegitimate son of Sir Christopher Trellayne, and happens to have picked up a stronger psi talent than most legitimate Trellaynes (something to do with all the other Trellayne chromosomes in the village gene pool -- Sir Christopher wasn't the first of his kind in the family). He learnt this years ago, and takes a perverse pride in serving the Trellayne family name by playing the faithful servant; he's a terrible snob, and bullies Sir Michael with his knowledge. He telepathically probed Mrs. Dangerton on her sick-bed,

and frightened her to death with mental attacks and illusions.

A few of the older villagers will remember rumors about Raleigh's parentage, but it would take a lot of social skill rolls to get even hints out of them.

Running the Scenario

This scenario should be played with maximum atmosphere. It's got all the elements of gothic romance -- wind-swept cliffs, a cursed family, sex (in the past) violence (in the present), snobbery, a remote setting, fidelity unto death . . . And mystery, and a shock ending.

The quantity and quality of mystery involved is partly up to the GM (and how long a game is desired), partly up to the players. All the PCs have to begin with is Wells' suspicions and the atmosphere; if they and the GM wish, they can spend days pursuing old rumors.

If all you want is a short, sharp game, however, then the GM can drop a lot of broad hints, let the PCs use super-powers (such as Telepathy or Retrocognition) to link Raleigh to the death, then move on to the fight scene. The exact power levels of Raleigh and John (and any latent powers, such as Danger Sense or mental defenses, possessed by Sir Michael) can be adjusted to the nature of the game desired and the power level of the PCs. Raleigh should be a competent telepath, but physically average and no match for the PCs as a group in open combat; John should be a lumbering "brick" with high defenses, and probably mental defenses and energy-damping darkness/obscuration powers to prevent the PCs detecting him the first time they mind scan the castle, or use X-Ray Vision on it.

The GM should manipulate events for one result, however; a final confrontation in the Castle library, with Sir Michael and Raleigh present. Under pressure of accusations, Raleigh may briefly cut loose with telepathic illusions, generating horrific images that will easily explain why Mrs. Dangerton's heart gave out, but he'll give up before being seriously hurt. Sir Michael will turn to him in shock, demanding to know why he did such a thing;
"WHY? To protect your secret of course, my young half-brother! You're weak, you know, far too weak to defend the name that you carry. I'm a better Trellayne than you'll ever be. But then, you and I know what a Trellayne can be, don't we?"

And with that, he opens a secret door behind a book-case. Naturally, this leads to the room where John is kept; John, agitated by telepathic emanations that Raleigh has been giving off, comes lumbering out, roaring with mental pain . . .

Maybe John could have been intellectually and emotionally human, given sympathetic treatment, but instead, he's spent two hundred years locked away. He hurls Raleigh aside, charges through the PCs, and bursts out of the castle. Behind him, Sir Michael slumps in despair. A convenient NPC goes to him; "Sir Michael? Are you hurt?"

"No . . . Not Sir Michael . . . Just Michael . . . Him! Don't-you understand? *He's the baronet! The seventh baronet!"* (Just in case the PCs are having trouble working out what's going on).

The scene is now set for a climactic fight on the nearest cliffs, at the end of which, John rushes a PC misses and hurls himself (or is hurled) over the edge onto the ghastly black rocks below -- and the Trellayne curse is ended.

Unless the GM wants a sequel, in which case John can survive the fall and reappear later as a crazed but cunning and near-indestructible supervillain, ripe for manipulation by any evil mastermind who comes across him.

And what about Raleigh? Did John batter him against the wall to fully fatal effect, or has he gone when the PCs get back to the library, to pursue his own career of embittered vengeance? How much will the press discover of the story, and what will it do for human-mutant relations? All this may be very much the GM's long-term concern . . .

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*Note; this scenario first appeared, in a slightly different form, in issue 7 of the now-defunct magazine **Fantazia**, in 1990.*

Nautilus, but Nice

Gaming with Captain Nemo and the *Nautilus*

by John Nowak

Art by Ashley Underwood

Captain Nemo

In the 1860s, there were a series of inconclusive sightings of a large and unknown sea creature. The fact it was capable of great speed became clear when it was spotted twice, within three days, at positions 2100 miles apart. Assuming the two sightings were of the same object, this would require its being able to swim at 27 knots; an almost unheard of speed for contemporary vessels; even a speedy frigate like *USS Abraham Lincoln*, was capable of only eighteen. It was suggested the sightings were simply misidentifications of whales or other known phenomena.

On March 5, 1867, the Canadian passenger ship *Moravian* collided with something in the middle of the Atlantic, cracking her keel but not sinking her. She must have hit something very hard and heavy, floating just under the surface.

On April 13, the Cunard liner *Scotia* was struck at 15 degrees longitude and 46 degrees latitude. She was able to limp home to Liverpool.

Scotia had a sharply defined, triangular hole below her waterline. She had been impaled by a sharp object which penetrated almost one and a half inches of iron plate, which had then withdrawn itself. The physical evidence was unimpeachable: *Scotia* had been hit by a self propelled ram.

Later, Captain Nemo would tell Professor Arronax the collision with *Scotia* had been accidental, which seems reasonable: Nemo did not attempt to finish off *Scotia*, and *Nautilus* was not equipped with a periscope or sonar, making collisions a real risk while near the surface. Nemo never explained the incident with *Moravian*, and it is possible the Canadian ship's accident did not involve *Nautilus* at all.

After two collisions, the maritime powers became alarmed. The possibility the monster was a hostile submersible vessel was proposed and rejected. It seemed unlikely such a ship could be constructed secretly, since no private individual had the resources and no major power could do so without exciting the attention of spies. The noted French marine biologist, M. Arronax, author of the two volume *Mysteries of the Great Submarine Grounds* , suggested the monster was a giant narwhal: a "sea unicorn."

The frigate *USS Abraham Lincoln* was modified as a whaler and sent out to kill the monster as a threat to navigation. The ship was fortunate to have aboard M. Arronax, his servant Conseil, and the Canadian harpooner Ned Land. After a long hunt, *Abraham Lincoln* found Captain Nemo's *Nautilus.*

Abraham Lincoln pursued the submarine. *Nautilus* matched her speed, staying just a few miles distant for most of a day. *Abraham Lincoln* was able to hit *Nautilus* with a nine pounder breechloader: the light weapon was unable to penetrate the hull. At night, *Nautilus* came to a stop. *Abraham Lincoln* came close enough for Ned Land to bounce a harpoon off her. *Nautilus* used her ballast pumps to sweep *Abraham Lincoln's* deck, knocking M. Arronax and presumably Ned Land into the water. Conseil dove in after his patron. *Nautilus* counterattacked *Abraham Lincoln*,

contenting herself with taking out the frigate's rudder. The ships disengaged, and *Nautilus* later rescued Arronax, Conseil, and Ned Land. Nemo informs Arronax he has a right to execute them after the attack by *Abraham Lincoln* (he obviously considers *Nautilus* to be a warship at war), but instead keeps the three prisoner.

Nautilus' action against *Abraham Lincoln* is quite odd, given what we later learn about the submarine. The high safe cruising speed of *Nautilus* was nearly twice the flank speed of *Abraham Lincoln* , and *Nautilus* did not attempt to escape by submerging for any extended period of time, or by simply outrunning her on the surface. Perhaps *Nautilus* was damaged, and unable to make more than 20 knots or submerge safely for long. Since *Nautilus* had a body aboard at this time (a funeral takes place before Arronax is introduced to Nemo) it seems reasonable to suggest *Abraham Lincoln* stumbled across *Nautilus* shortly after her quarry had been engaged in battle. While Nemo made no mention of this to Arronax, it would be reasonable for him to conceal it from his guest; *Nautilus* was a ship at war and warfare is deception. Nemo would rarely tell Arronax what his plans were, and it would not be surprising for such a high technology prototype to have gremlins aboard. It is possible the somewhat erratic 60,000 mile journey of Arronax was punctuated by mechanical failures and delays Arronax was never informed of.

"Whether this person was thirty five or fifty years of age I could not say. He was tall, had a large forehead, straight nose, a clearly cut mouth, beautiful teeth, with fine tape hands [Nemo] was certainly the most admirable specimen I had ever seen."

-M. Arronax.

In saying "My name is Nemo," the master of *Nautilus* is quoting Ulysses' self introduction to Polyphemus: the word means "nobody." Even in *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* it is obvious "Nemo" is a *nom de guerre* and probable the ubiquitous "N" insignias refer to the ship's name. Nemo is an elusive character, and deliberately so. M. Arronax is a marine biologist, so impressed with *Nautilus* as a technical accomplishment it takes the rugged Ned Land to bring him back to reality. Much of Nemo's personality is only hinted at, because the narrator of the book barely notices it.

Mysterious Island answers most of the questions about Nemo. Popular opinion was ironically correct: neither a private individual nor a sovereign nation could have built *Nautilus* . Nemo was Prince Dakkar, a private individual who *was* a sovereign nation, ruler of one of the 500 or so independent principalities of British dominated India. Dakkar attended European colleges and distinguished himself as a brilliant naval engineer.

Dakkar backed the losing side in the Sepoy mutiny of 1857-58. His parents, wife, and two children were killed while he watched, and his homeland "destroyed" (presumably put under military government and parceled out to allied rulers). Contrary to the Walt Disney film, Nemo never explicitly mentions torture.

The historical Mutiny was an unusually hideous affair, even by the standards of 19th Century warfare. Atrocities by both sides were common, and the massacre of Dakkar's family cannot in justice be considered anti British propaganda on the part of M. Verne.

After the destruction of his homeland, Dakkar fled with a group of loyal friends, building *Nautilus* in secrecy, using machine parts subcontracted from around the world.

It seems likely that *Nautilus* had been under design and construction for some time, although she was completed too late to serve in the Mutiny. If this is true, *Nautilus* was designed to challenge the premier naval power of the world, a *wunderwaffen* which missed the war she was built for. It's easy to imagine Dakkar begging the organizers of the Mutiny to hold off until she was at sea, and experiencing the frustrating delays any high technology engineer goes through, until the organizers decide they simply can't wait any longer.

Historically, the development of the attack submarine was almost entirely driven by antagonists of Great Britain. David Bushnell's *Turtle* of the American Revolutionary War is often considered the first attack submarine. The United States Navy's Hull #1, the *USS Holland*, was originally named *Fenian Ram* . The Fenians were US based Irish rebels who invaded Canada twice during the 19th Century, before it was illegal for US residents to attack foreign countries. Finally, Germany's U boats of the First World War made the submarine an essential element of modern navies. Verne was right about the target of the first practical submarine warships; he just had it built by the wrong country.

" A number of sailors of the Nautilus had come up onto the platform These sailors were evidently of different nations, although the European type was visible in all of them. I recognized some unmistakable Irishmen, Frenchmen, some Slavs, and a Greek or Candiote "

- M. Arronax.

Note Arronax does not mention Englishmen, and that the Crimean War had Great Britain supporting the Ottoman Empire (which included a rebellious Greece) against Russia. Nemo sinks at least two British warships while Arronax was aboard, and the only formal connection Nemo has with the people of the surface is giving treasure from the ocean bottom to help finance Crete's insurrection against the Ottoman Empire.

Nemo clearly maintains an emotional tie with his homeland: he rescues an Indian pearl diver and gives him a gift of a bag of pearls.

Despite his war, Nemo's first love remains oceanography. Arronax is impressed with Nemo's accomplishments as a fellow scientist. Nemo takes *Nautilus* to the South Pole (Verne didn't know Antarctica was in the way), and in general indulges Arronax's scientific curiosity. It's possible Arronax was the only person aboard able to talk about marine biology at Nemo's level, and that Nemo wanted his work preserved.

Nemo is a rather Westernized individual. The motto of *Nautilus* ("Changing through changes") is in Latin. Nemo is from India, but we don't know if he's Hindu, Muslim, or Sikh (although the name "Dakkar" hints he isn't Sikh.) *Nautilus* buries her dead (although cremation is perhaps tricky two hundred feet under water), and the graves are marked with a cross; it seems likely Nemo is either Christian or tolerant, or both.

Nemo smokes cigars, and Arronax does not mention anything aboard *Nautilus* which would have looked out of place aboard a European ship. Nemo's extensive art collection is apparently all European. The uniform aboard *Nautilus* is similar to Western naval norms, and Nemo plays an organ, not a sitar.

Arronax and his two friends escape *Nautilus* before she sailed into the Maelstrom, a severe tidal whirlpool near Norway. It is a scene that smacks of deliberate misinformation. By this point, *Nautilus* was a hunted ship. She was attacked by a British warship; the sailors aboard *Abraham Lincoln* presumably told the world she was a submarine, and there was no reason to hold the trio prisoner any longer. In fact, allowing the prisoners to escape with the news of *Nautilus* ' "destruction" may have been Nemo's plan. Submarines are very good at vanishing.

" I also hope that Nautilus *has survived where so many other ships have been lost if Captain Nemo still inhabits the ocean, his adopted country, may hatred be appeased in his savage heart! May the contemplation of so many wonders extinguish forever the spirit of vengeance! May the judge disappear, and the philosopher continue the peaceful exploration of the sea!"*

- M. Arronax.

According to *Mysterious Island,* Nemo and *Nautilus* escaped the Maelstrom, eventually to come to rest on the castaway island. Nemo dies, *Nautilus'* last survivor. It is a tired old man who is buried in a wrecked *Nautilus* in the pages of *Mysterious Island,* far from the coral graveyard of his friends and crewmates.

Unfortunately, Verne goofed his chronology. M. Arronax's chronicle of his voyage aboard *Nautilus* cannot have been printed long before 1870. The hero of *Mysterious Island* is a Union Army combat engineer who escapes a Confederate POW camp. He recognizes Nemo at least three years before Arronax could have printed his book. Worse, the Nemo he meets is a frail old man, at least ten years older than the vigorous captain met by Arronax in a few years. Aside from the temporal displacement, Prince Dakkar of *Mysterious Island* is much the same man as Nemo in *20,000 Leagues.*

The obvious question in playing Nemo is, is Nemo a piratical terrorist or a national hero struggling against cruel tyranny? The only possible answer is yes.

It is true he attacks British warships without warning, but England killed his family and he wants them to suffer for it. It's not laudable but it's understandable. He restricted himself to military targets and used minimum force against neutral warships: *Abraham Lincoln* attacked *Nautilus* repeatedly, was filled with sailors who would realize she was a submarine, and the most deadly ship killer afloat, yet Nemo let her escape.

Nemo is furthermore devoted to his crew. He is the second man on deck during the fight with the kraken; the first opened the hatch and had been immediately killed. His crew reciprocates; this pan national mix is certainly willing to die for him, but as individuals, they remain ciphers: redshirts in the grand tradition.

Nautilus

It has been claimed that modern nuclear submarines can outperform Verne's fictional creation. This is a debatable point. Certainly Verne's *Nautilus* is faster than and can dive much deeper than *Los Angeles* class attack submarines, if one trusts published statistics. Of course, modern subs are built for stealth first with speed and depth coming in second. Silence was not a major concern for Nemo, working in an era without hydrophones, sonar, or antisubmarine warfare.

Nautilus was a warship at war, and M. Arronax was at best a neutral prisoner in that war. It is possible Nemo misled Arronax about certain elements of *Nautilus'* design, but this article will assume he was mostly honest.

Nautilus was cigar shaped, 232 feet long with a maximum width of 26 feet (70.7 and 7.9m, respectively). She has a surface area of 6032 square feet, and submerged displaces 1500 tons. She is of an unusual double hull construction: instead of an lightly constructed outer hull for streamlining and a rigid internal pressure bearing hull, her outer hull is pressure bearing. Arronax did not make a mistake here, because he described *Nautilus* bouncing a nine pound cannonball. She probably has no more than one and a half decks.

She has a cruising speed of 30 knots and flank speed of around 45 knots (56 and 83 kph). She refuels once during the book, so her cruising range is probably in excess of 60,000 miles. By way of comparison, the VII C U boat of World War II had a cruising range of 9000 miles.

In the course of the book, *Nautilus* dives to five miles, although Nemo admits this is an extreme strain he does not care to subject her to for very long. This is about twenty times deeper than modern military subs are designed to reach. Most of the ocean floor is between one and two and a half miles deep; the Mariana Trench is between six and seven miles.

Nautilus uses ballast tanks. These tanks are emptied by pumps: not pressurized air or the constant volume pumps used by modern subs, but extremely powerful brute strength pressure pumps which would do credit to a fire department. These pumps can be used as water cannon.

She can remain submerged for 24 hours comfortably, and can extend this by 48 hours with reserve tanks. Electrolysis of oxygen from sea water is mentioned, but is not used because *Nautilus* does not have scrubbers to remove carbon dioxide from the air.

Nautilus ' crew wears heavy sweaters and sealskin caps: it's probably cold aboard, and her heaters don't do a very good job at keeping out the chill of the depths. Arronax doesn't mention feeling unusually cold, nor does he describe condensation on the metal walls.

Arronax doesn't mention sonar or periscopes. Instead, *Nautilus* has a dorsal mounted searchlight and pilot box, which are retracted into the hull when she is planning to attack. At battle stations, *Nautilus* is blind. She must have directional hydrophones so a target ship can be rammed.

Arronax specifies her diving planes are amidships, where we would now consider the worst possible place. Clearly, *Nautilus* was intended to maintain a constant trim even while diving or surfacing. The clutter described in her 12,000 volume library wouldn't survive many extreme attitude changes, or a ram. The library must be kept in bookcases or shelves with bars to lock the volumes in place. His art must be securely fastened to the walls. Loose books or maps

would become projectiles in bad weather.

Nautilus as described would have a tendency to pitch while submerged and roll while surfaced. Sharklike, she would have to maintain a fairly high speed to keep any control at all. She probably has trim cells in the extreme bow and stern. Of course, she was a high technology prototype and major design flaws are realistic.

Nautilus carries a pinnace, a large sailboat with a telegraph wire connecting her to *Nautilus* . This wire would break if stretched too far. Its length is not mentioned, but 1000 yards is probably generous.

Power

Verne's *Nautilus* was not nuclear; this was not on the horizon as a possibility in the 1860s. When Nemo was asked about her engines, he replied they were electric: this is obvious obscuration on his part. Electricity is a means by which energy can be transmitted, not generated.

Nemo never did describe *Nautilus* 's engines in detail, but he may have let the secret slip accidentally. At one point during M. Arronax's stay, *Nautilus* refuels with sodium. If sodium mixes with water, it generates heat, then decomposes the water into oxygen and hydrogen, which recombine violently. The reaction does not require atmospheric oxygen, and could theoretically be used to power a submarine.

Crew Compliment

At 1500 tons, *Nautilus* was a large and comfortable vessel; she probably had a crew of about twenty. This is convenient for role playing: small enough to be manageable, but large enough for referees to slip in an occasional "new" crewman, to make room for a new player or non player character.

Nautilus *in the Movies*

Nautilus has always been shown as much wider and heavier than the vessel described by Verne. The *Nautilus* used in the classic Disney film would probably displace close to 4000 tons if it's the length described by Verne. This is probably because slender cigars aren't visually interesting.

The *Nautilus* shown in movies often has a retractable ram. A retractable ram is a questionable bit of engineering: it would occupy space inside the hull to protect a solid piece of steel. Perhaps the ability to recoil instead of snapping off might be useful.

The *Nautilus* from the Disney film has a saw toothed dorsal ridge stretching from the base of the ram to the to the roof of a (non retractable) pilot house. It's not in the book, but it is visually impressive and makes quite a bit of sense. Instead of piercing a hull, the ridge cuts the hull like a saw, and probably delivers less shock to the crew.

Role playing with **Nautilus**

The 19th Century is a very ripe time period for adventuring. The superpower of the day Great Britain can be played equally well as mother empire, honorable antagonists, or villains without being too a historical. The source material is superb; a personal favorite is Farwell's *Queen Victoria's Little Wars* .

Adventure hooks are easy to come by. Verne and HG Wells are highly recommended: Wells is by far the better writer (after translation, at least) but Verne knew more about science and could be relied upon to examine an idea more thoroughly. Wells' ideas were, by and large, more "gameable." A referee with HG Wells in a pocket could send players to the Island of Doctor Moreau, or into a hack and slash fight against rats which have eaten the Food of the Gods.

In "Into the Abyss," Wells postulated a self aware submarine species, pointing out that if they sank after death, there would be no reason they would be known to Human science of the time. He describes a simple vertical speed braking system similar to the one used on *Trieste* 's descent to the bottom of the Mariana Trench.

Equipment

Weaponry is a major concern in any role playing game. The late 19th Century was the period that magazine rifles began to become practical, yet had not yet passed into general military use. This means it's perfectly reasonable for player characters to use Winchesters while the Faceless Minions of the Bad Guy use Martini Henrys with 1/8 the rate of fire. Mean, but reasonable.

Nemo's crew is equipped with pneumatic rifles firing charged capacitors which deliver a fatal shock to their targets. They're bulky, very short ranged and probably inaccurate.

Malf (crit) *DMG* 6d *SS* 15 *Acc* 3 *Max* 50 *Wt* 20 *RoF* 1/2 *Shots* 10 *ST* 12 (9 underwater) *Rcl* -2 *Cost* 1500 / 2 per round. TL5. Metal or conductive armor does not protect.

The Maximum range above assumes the gun is being used underwater. In the open air, the shell will fly much further, but it's a low velocity round following a parabolic course, and the sights are not designed for this. In the air, give it 1/2 *Damage* 50 yards and *Max* 300: attacks beyond 1/2 Damage range do full damage, but are at -5 to hit.

The electrical shock forces the target to make a HT roll at -3; if the target fails, its heart stops. This is how the weapon was able to kill large sharks with a single shot. CPR wasn't invented yet, but merciful referees should allow revival with a successful *First Aid* or *Physician +3* roll.

Nautilus does carry conventional weapons in her armory, which Nemo gives to the heroes of *Mysterious Island* . She probably carried quite a bit of equipment M. Arronax never saw.

Nautilus's diving gear are described as surface pressure hard suits. They are not wet suits or scuba suits, and are too bulky to allow a wearer to swim. Instead, divers walk across the ocean floor, which is very convenient for referees who don't want to bother with depth markers. Wearers can barely move without water to buoy them up: suited divers are wheeled about *Nautilus* on racks. Arronax describes working at 30 atmospheres of depth; close to 1000 feet underwater.

Verne does not mention nitrogen narcosis, "rapture of the deep," which affects divers who go too deep or too quickly with severely impaired judgment, usually compared to drunkenness. Interestingly, he states his divers need to descend slowly, but neither nitrogen narcosis nor the bends should affect a diver in a constant pressure suit. In a blooper, he states the breathing apparatus uses a tongue switch to toggle valves while inhaling or exhaling, but then has divers taking naps without suffocating. For a book written ninety years before Jaques Cousteau, his work is more than impressive.

If we assume M. Arronax was ST 10 (he is not described as a powerful man) and that the weight of the diving suit and all his equipment took him to XHvy encumbrance, the total weight was at least 200 pounds. Less twenty pounds for the gun and sixty pounds for the air tank, and the suit itself weight about 120 pounds. Underwater, assume Move 1 for anyone with a Base Move of six or less, and Move 2 for anyone with a Base Move of 7+.

A *Nautilus* diving suit is DR 20 over the torso and Vitals, DR 30 over the Brain and Head (solid copper!). The three portholes ion the helmets are -5 to hit and are DR 10. The limbs have DR 15.

The suits do not have necks. The helmets are immobile and the wearer turns his head inside them. A -2 to Vision rolls is in order. In any but the shallowest and clearest water, apply a 1 to Vision rolls for each yard of distance: even the electrical lamps of Nemo have trouble cutting through water.

The air tank is DR 30. Breaching a high pressure air tank will cause a nasty explosion: 6d6 and triple damage for the guy wearing it.

Victoriana for Gamers

Space: 1889 supplements may still be found in gaming stores; these are excellent sources for inspiration and flavor.

GURPS Horror reprinted parts of William Barton's "Gamer's Guide to Victorian London" from *Fantasy Gamer #2* . There is probably no better introduction to the possibilities of the era.

Class

Arthur Conan Doyle believed a set of photographs showing two girls playing with fairies was genuine on the grounds that two girls "of the artisan class" could not possibly be clever enough to set up a paper cutout and photograph it with a live model. Doyle's reputation is exaggerated.

Class was a very real thing in this period, and lower class NPCs can count on being underestimated.

The US and Global Politics

At this time, the United States was a regional, not a global power. The extraordinary network of alliances that exists today had not been formed, and the notion that British, Canadian, and French forces would serve under and American supreme commander would have seemed fantastic. The US Navy was not a serious challenge to the supremacy of the Royal Navy, although the ambition was there. In 1903, Sir Garnet Wolseley predicted that the dominant superpowers of the 20th Century would be the United States and China, but he was a remarkably perceptive man speaking at the twilight of British supremacy.

The tight alliance between Great Britain and the United States did not exist until after World War II. The two powers were at the brink of war throughout much of the 19th Century. Although some co operation for mutual benefit did take place, it would be a mistake to portray them as allies.

Captain Nemo as a Player Character

This involves a great deal of difficulty. Don't try it at all unless you have a volunteer.

Nemo limits the game considerably. He's made an oath to never walk on dry land other humans have walked on, so he needs to remain at sea. He is also at war with Great Britain, which limits plot possibilities. It is possible he could tear himself away from his oaths, but it's hard to imagine his shaking hands with a representative of Her Majesty's government on dry land under the impetus of anything short of an invasion from Wells' Martians.

Players under an NPC Nemo

Nemo commands the *Nautilus*, and it's usually a mistake to put player characters under an NPC commander for any length of time.

Nautilus *under a PC Captain*

Since *Nautilus* has a small crew, it actually makes sense for the captain to command landing parties. Nemo may be dead, or retired, or the admiral of a small fleet of *Nautilus* class ships.

Captain Nemo in *GURPS*

ST 11
DX 12
IQ 16
HT 11

Basic Damage: 1d-1 Thrust; 1d+1 Swing

Basic Speed: 5.75; **Move** 5

Dodge 5 **Parry** 6 (Axe/Mace)

Advantages: Charisma +2, Appearance (Attractive), Acute Vision +2

Disadvantages: Intolerance (the British), Bloodlust, Oath (Never walk on populated land), Sense of Duty (conquered peoples), Sense of Duty (the crew of the *Nautilus*), Enemy (Great Britain, 6 or less).

Notable Skills: Area Knowledge (Oceans)-15, Armory-13, Art (Hobby)-14, Ax/Mace-12, Boating-12, Botany (Specialty: Marine)-18, Chemistry-17, Diving (Hard suit)-14, Engineer: Chemical-20, History-16, Language: English-15, Language: French-15, Mathematics-14, Mechanic: Dynamos-16, Mining-14, Musical Instrument: Pipe organ-13, Navigation-14

Bonus! Download this printable 3-page map of the Nautilus! You'll need the Adobe Acrobat reader to view it. (Warning: this file is 5MB!)

Also here's a smaller version of the map, also in PDF, for on-screen viewing. (470K)

Parallel Progressions

Alternate Technologies for RPGs

by Phil Masters

Art by Lance S. Winkel

Many RPGs use the idea of "Tech Levels" - measurements of where a planet or society lies on the path from stone axes to star-flight. (***Traveller*** seems to have originated this.) This approach is very useful, and yet it has an obvious flaw; it assumes that there is just *one* possible path.

But we know of just one history; it seems unlikely that every world and species would follow exactly the same pattern. In fact, variations *have* happened; the Incas, and Aztecs lacked the wheel and iron, yet they built cities and empires comparable to ancient Rome. (Actually, the wheel is rather over-rated; many Middle Eastern cultures made little use of it. Carts *sink* in soft sand.) Furthermore, games usually base their "Levels" on out-of-date SF stories or a handful of cyberpunk clichés. But any dedicated SF fan can think of several ways that technology *might* evolve. This article looks at a few options.

Different Bases

What about radically different starting-points? Early human beings mastered stone tools and fire, then moved on to smelt metals. Along the way, they also domesticated animals (one of history's great under-rated leaps). What alternatives were there?

Beginner's Biotech: Why use *machines* for tasks? After all, living things are more versatile, more widely available, and reproduce and repair themselves.

The snag is, of course, that living beings are terribly tricky to manipulate. Domesticating animals is difficult; only a few species will tolerate human control. However, given that animals can be bred and even genetically adapted for tasks, it is possible to imagine a technology based on organic life. The catch with *that* is that, unless one already has genetic engineering, the process is slow and limited.

In his "West of Eden" trilogy (***West of Eden***, ***Winter in Eden***, and ***Return to Eden***), Harry Harrison places "biotechnology" in the hands of the Yilanè - intelligent dinosaurs. The Yilanè are ancient, patient, and group-minded, with an ignorance and fear of fire that limits them severely. However, they have been intelligent for a *long* time; they *breed* ships, microscopes, and communications and recording devices.

Could humans possibly do something similar? Imagine an old-established society with a lot of domesticated animals, many specially bred. With "equipment" taking years to grow, such a society would tend to take the *long* view. Medicine would be quite advanced, as biological principles would be well understood. This needn't be a Green Utopia, however; if living things are tools, they can be manipulated and discarded at whim.

Chemical Reactions: Humans have used "practical chemistry" for thousands of years; cookery, herbalism, and metal and glass working. What if early humans had discovered a few more interesting tricks?

This could mean a world of "witches" and "magicians," with powerful individuals wielding an arsenal of drugs and

pyrotechnics, and adventurers seeking out new herbs or curious mineral deposits. Warfare could get *messy*, with the deadliest weapons being either subtle and vicious poisons, or "Greek Fire" - crude napalm. Such a society might arise on a world with a rich ecology, but limited metal deposits and few domesticable animals.

It's Electric: There is evidence that the ancient Babylonians discovered electroplating, and used it to decorate metal-work. If this is true, then it will have been a crude, *ad hoc* art - dunking metals in clay pots of naturally-occurring acids, and finding that certain combinations leave thin but durable coatings of gold on bronze. However, the Babylonians had made a start.

Suppose that a bright craftsman had realised that primitive batteries could be linked together in series? Early versions of this trick would have limited use, but they could be improved with time, and eventually, another clever fellow might bring the batteries together with a lodestone, and discover the motor and dynamo. Meanwhile, tinkering with electrochemistry could produce a number of usefully pure metals and materials - some of which could "feed back" to improve the new industry.

It's unlikely that any of this would do *very* much for the early Iron Age, but eventually, it might create a minor industrial revolution. Imagine Ancient Rome with the wealthy areas lit by crude arc lights (with generators powered by slaves or draft animals), and later, medieval lords communicating with crystal radios...

Alternate Histories

Moving forward, it's possible to imagine different histories throwing up variant technologies. There are a number of stock "alternates;" Rome never rising or never falling, the Arab Conquests continuing, the Reformation being defeated. However, these tend to be shown as having little influence on *types* of technology; the Industrial Revolution may come early or be suppressed, but it still involves steam railways. That might not be the whole story.

Chinese Minds: The culture with the most impressive set of scientific and technological innovations to its name is China. For much of history, the Chinese were the most advanced society on Earth. Why didn't they conquer everyone else with intricate hand-crafted bamboo machines and military rockets?

There are a number of explanations. A lot of China's strength was based on a stable, conservative approach. Their system of peasants and bureaucrats was very robust, but it didn't encourage Western-style "progress;" science and technology were seen as trivial. The Chinese had just about everything they wanted within their borders, and generally despised both merchants and foreign barbarians.

So an alternate history in which the Chinese became world conquerors would probably have to diverge early, to enable a different attitude to develop. Nonetheless, it could be interesting.

Gunpowder Gods: Explosives could be the key to such a "Chinese history." They are not very hard to make; the Chinese discovered gunpowder, and even used it in war, but they never found it quite useful *enough*. Effective guns were invented - by slow stages - when it travelled west.
But one favourite SF theme is the time- or space-traveller introducing gunpowder for warfare. It might be interesting to try and imagine what different historical cultures could have done with it. The Assyrians would doubtless have blasted down the gates of rival cities, while the Romans would have wielded heavy-barrelled muskets as efficiently as they did spears. A really off-beat history might give gunpowder to the Mayans, enabling them to build a strong, militaristic, stone-age empire. When the Conquistadors arrived, they might be faced with something they couldn't conquer; indeed, once equipped with captured European ship designs, the Mesoamericans might take the war back to Europe . . .

Hellenistic Heroism: As every schoolchild knows, Hero of Alexandria invented a simple steam engine (as well as pneumatic and surveying devices) in the first century AD, and other Greeks and Romans were comparably ingenious; the Romans, diligent practical engineers, also had simple mass production. This raises the possibility of the Industrial Revolution coming fifteen hundred years earlier.

The question is whether Roman metallurgy could have produced robust and efficient enough machines, or the Roman economy paid for them. Furthermore, Hero's steam engine was hardly as efficient as Watt's. However, Roman legions wielding mass-produced crossbows, backed up with steam-powered canal boats, make an interesting image.

Steam Power: "Steampunk" is a loose category of recent SF and fantasy; the SF flavour mostly depicts nineteenth century technology, from when the Industrial Revolution really hit its stride, developing even more spectacularly than it actually did. The cast iron, polished brass, steam-powered tech of that era can be stylish stuff.

The most meticulously developed "Steampunk Tech" world appears in ***The Difference Engine***, by William Gibson and Bruce Sterling. In this story, political changes in the early nineteenth century enable Charles Babbage to complete his mechanical computers; this in turn enables the creation of a ruthless, computerised meritocracy in the Victorian age. For an example of a steampunk/twentieth-century game world, see "Steampunk," by Cameron Winstanley, in ***arcane*** issue 6.

Magic and the Mind

In most fantasy games, magic produces the same, useful effects (almost) every time. However, we have another name for systems that produce predictable results; *science* - and technology manipulates this. Similarly, there is the idea of "Powers of the Mind" - Psionics. Psi stories are popular in SF, although they are beginning to look as fantastic as magic these days; writers use psi the way that fantasy authors use spells - for whatever the plot demands. But psionics are seen as "scientific." So perhaps a world with game-style magic or psi would develop a "pseudo-industrial" society?

Sophisticated Medievalism: Imagine a world with the appearance of medieval sword-and-sorcery - but a second glance reveals complications; elements that function like technology. For example, wars are fought with squadrons of flying carpets that act like helicopter gunships, and those towering, crenellated castles have magically-provided hot and cold running water.

It may well be that, logically, medieval feudalism wouldn't last long in this situation. With enhanced agriculture and transport, less of the population would have to work on the land, while magic weapons would remove the power of the armoured knight to oppress the peasantry, better even than the longbow or the gun. An interesting game might be built around the struggle between feudalism and mercantilism, with mages aiding both sides, or demanding noble rank of their own, and different factions (including the Darklord and his yuppie necromancers) seeking to encourage or prevent civil war. On the other hand, it may be more fun to abandon such logic, and assume that magic somehow permits feudalism to hang on indefinitely.

Life As We Know It: Technomagic *might* produce a world "like" the present day; cars and aircraft propelled by elemental spells, television sets looking suspiciously like giant crystal balls, and so on. Alternatively, telepathy might replace radio, with telekinetically-assisted travel - "We have lift-off, all Espers are go . . ."

Such worlds are often played for laughs - ***The Flintstones*** with magic - but this isn't compulsory; they could just as easily involve a lot of foul necromantic mill-towns, Big Brother watching you through scrying magic, and research mages in lab coats sacrificing small furry animals (and the odd human) on the altar of thaumaturgic progress.

A New Age of Wonders: A *really* sophisticated form of Technomagic or Psi-Tech could be very spectacular, with machines empowered and controlled by glowing crystals, enchanted airships flying silently between mile-high towers, and buildings telekinetically sculpted from "miracle" metals. Campaigns in such a world would owe far more to space opera than sword-and-sorcery fantasy; the "Lensman" books might be a good place to start. (You can still have questing knights - they'd just look more like Obi-Wan than Lancelot.)

Important People: If magic or psionics can only be worked by sentient beings, then certain people become very important. What might this result in? A new feudalism or a caste system? The "powered" folk might become the rulers, or be organised in some kind of guild with strict rules, or they might be used as specialist servants. (Or the situation might be a mixture; a ***Babylon 5***-style "Psi Corps," say, apparently bound by rules but actually greedy for power, and oppressing the less powerful psis.) Such social tensions could make for excellent game plots.

A variation is the idea of "Ultimate Slaves," especially popular in psi stories; "talented" individuals are conscripted and carefully controlled. This provides lots of role-playing opportunities, in an angst-prone, adolescent sort of way. ("I'm special, and I'm persecuted!")

Different Futures

Moving forwards, let's examine how technology might evolve from the situation we know today...
Sculpted Flesh: Biotechnology and genetic engineering feature in many imaginary futures - if only as a part. What, though, if they became the linchpin of progress, solving every problem better than "crude" mechanics?

Although writers have imagined a twenty-first century of modified-animal servants and semi-sentient tools, useful genetic engineering is likely to take a while to develop. DNA is, in effect, a set of complex, disorganised assembly instructions, with many irrelevant passages and footnotes crossed out, all written in shorthand. Nonetheless, its potential is going to interest a lot of people.

Things are already underway, with the Human Genome project preparing a map for explorers, and researchers trying to remedy genetic diseases. Next is likely to be the attempt to prevent problems by DNA surgery in the womb (leading to major ethical problems), along with minor modifications to animals and plants, making them useful sources of pharmaceuticals, and even, perhaps, transplantable organs.

Eventually, specially-created life-forms should become possible, although it will be a long time before these become anything other than minor modifications of familiar species. Whether humans will be the first or the last to be radically modified is an interesting question; there would obviously be an advantage to making humans better able to live in space or underwater - but on the other hand, this is "tinkering with human nature."

A few possibilities are fairly obvious, and appear in fiction; for example, modified coral might be used for building. Eventually, the "Biotech World" could be full of modified people, semi-sentient animals, organic buildings, and exotic pharmaceuticals.

A Biotech Future could seem either horrific or wonderful. It could be filled with living, breathing, responsive wonders; however, this would be achieved by taking a cold-blooded, ruthless approach to organic life. Genetically engineered *weapons* could get especially nasty; think of the *Alien* movies. Of course, for game purposes, it can be most interesting to display both "nice" and "nasty" aspects.

Engines of Creation: SF writers are currently very fond of "nanotechnology" - hypothetical machines constructed on a microscopic scale, probably able to replicate themselves, certainly with the power to manipulate individual cells, and perhaps even *molecules*. Such "nanomechs" could have countless uses, including medicine, along with manufacturing processes - "weaving" or "sculpting" on the molecular level.

The first "nanomechs" would probably serve highly specialised functions; surgery (destroying cancer cells, scrubbing out blocked arteries) or precision micro-manufacturing, for example. Nanotech replication would likely be limited, unreliable, and hedged around with regulations, to avoid horrific "runaways." Thus, nanomechs would be expensive, and most people might never encounter them. However, more experienced designers, and companies looking for markets, would lead to a spread, much as with microelectronics in recent decades. For example, high-purity, ultra-strong materials produced by "weaver" nanos could first be used for specialised tools, then expensive body armour, then ordinary clothing.

As nanotechnology spreads, the use of nanomechs to manufacture other nanomechs would bring costs down. As "nanos" take over in hospitals, and people lose their fear (replacing it with overconfidence), a few expensive nanomachines would doubtless come available in shops, mostly as gimmicks; jewellery that changes colour on verbal command, say, or self-cleaning clothes.

With general public acceptance, and a library of design methodologies, nanotech could become ever more common - leading to its use for illicit purposes such as spying, met with nanotech countermeasures. Eventually, every necessary

task would seem to be performed by nanomechs, and the world would get very strange indeed.

Going Carefully: Gamers and SF writers have a natural love of "high energy" tech, solving each problem by coming up with something bigger and better, and with strangely few troubles with power supplies. This is great fun, but "Green" ideas, and pollution from modern industry, make some people in the real world more cautious. A pessimistic reaction is to assume that society will be forced to slip backwards technologically, but it's also possible to imagine a future on careful, energy-efficient lines, with people learning to study the consequences of new ideas before using them - but not necessarily ignoring them.

One version: at the end of the twentieth century, economic depression forces industries to review their long-term policies, while global warming demands international action. (At first, some nations think that they are benefiting from the climatic changes, but the weather just becomes *too* unpredictable.) Eventually, people come to accept that big cars aren't necessities of life, and electronic communications expand (e-mail causes less pollution than a car journey). One danger at this stage - good for game plots - would be anti-pollution laws becoming excuses for tyranny; PCs could be caught between corner-cutting industrialists and fanatical "controllers."
With "Green" measures in place, industry should learn more discrete techniques, while populations, encouraged by improved telecommunications, move away from cities. Low-key biotechnology could develop despite stringent controls; it might be useful for cleaning up old pollution. Satellites should remain important, for communications, meteorology, and pollution monitoring, but manned space flight might lapse.

However, in time, discrete, elegant technologies can achieve as much as raw force; fusion power-plants (not necessarily pollution-prone) could provide electricity to run electro-magnetic spaceship launchers, and so on. Game plots could be based on conflicts between more and less cautious groups, and between Earth-based factions and "developers" who have moved into space, where pollution doesn't matter.

Big Dumb Objects: This critics' term describes the subject-matter of a number of SF books - Ringworlds, Dyson Spheres, giant starships, and so on. So - what about a history in which human beings concentrate on large-scale engineering?

The first stage could be marked by bigger and better bridges, tunnels, and skyscrapers, and a lot of activity in space, albeit mostly in Earth orbit, with many manned stations. Eventually, Earth is criss-crossed by rapid transport systems, while the space stations link up with each other physically. The Moon is heavily mined, and bases are sited on Mars, which - along with Venus - may be terraformed. Eventually, "space elevators" are constructed - towers reaching from Earth to orbit. Some giant colony starships may also be built.

In time, geostationary orbit is occupied by a continuous ring - a wheel, with the space elevators as spokes. The asteroid belt and planets are heavily mined. Then, giant energy collectors are placed around the sun. Any starships built at this point are "microworlds," capable of supporting huge populations indefinitely.

Thus, the solar system becomes a giant building site; large objects are moved around with startling enthusiasm. (Any accidents could get *very* messy.) Ultimately, a Ringworld or Dyson Sphere may be wrapped around the sun - details depend on developments in materials science, gravity control, etc. Colonies in other solar systems are, by now, performing similar feats there. And adventurers have *very* large areas to explore, and a long history of outrageous scientific projects to provide them with problems.

Combining Paths

It's easy to imagine two or more "future paths" actually "coming true;" for example, genetically-adapted humans could use nanotech to build Big Dumb Objects. In fact, this may be the most likely way of things - or parts of several paths may combine with other developments that we can't even imagine.

The snag with this, from a gamer's point of view, is that the world becomes so complex and alien that the GM can't keep track. Players alternate confusion and frustration with finding new, logical solutions to problems that the GM missed, thus wrecking every plot. However, if you feel up to attempting a fully detailed "multiple tech" future - good

luck!

More Relevant Fiction

The Dragon Masters (Jack Vance): Another story of creatures selectively bred for specialised purposes.

Pasquale's Angel (Paul J. McAuley): A Renaissance Italy in which Leonardo da Vinci becomes an inventor rather than an artist, and his fantastical machines work.
On Biotech: ***Sexual Chemistry: Sardonic Tales of the Genetic Revolution*** (Brian Stableford); ***Ribofunk*** (Paul Di Filippo).

Concerning Nanotechnology: ***Queen of Angels*** (Greg Bear); ***The Diamond Age*** (Neal Stephenson); ***Aristoi*** (Walter John Williams).

For Big Dumb Objects: the *Ringworld* books and ***A World Out of Time*** (Larry Niven); ***The Fountains of Paradise*** and the *Rama* books (Arthur C. Clarke); the *Orbitsville* trilogy (Bob Shaw); ***The Time Ships*** (Stephen Baxter).

Schismatrix (Bruce Sterling) isn't just about one technological future; it's about a clash between philosophies, each trying to ensure that *their* technology defines humanity's future.
If you try to measure scientific progress, and plot graphs of the measures, they seem to be accelerating upwards. What happens when they go off the scale? This is the "Singularity." See Vernor Vinge's ***Marooned in Realtime***.

More Reading

Gamers with an interest in weapons technology should look out for ***Guns! Guns! Guns!***, (BTRC). This enables weapons to be designed from first principles at any Tech Level, then statted up for use in a range of systems.

A lot of 1940s and '50s SF, such as A.E. van Vogt's ***Slan***, dealt with psionic characters and their problems. Marvel Comics' "X-Mutant" titles borrow the theme.

RPG writers love the idea of technomagic - see ***Bloodshadows*** (West End Games), ***GURPS Time Travel Adventures*** (Steve Jackson Games), and ***Magitech*** (TSR).

For an RPG set in a magically-powered steampunk world, see ***Tales of Gargentihr*** (Sanctuary Games).

Some RPGs set out to emulate classic "pulp" SF, where everything technological just keeps getting bigger and flashier, with the occasional radical invention. This is not "realistic," although it is *almost* possible to "explain" it with a parallel history diverging around 1945, when the first seeds of modern information technology and miniaturisation were sown. See ***GURPS Lensman*** (Steve Jackson Games).

Nanotechnology was originally the idea of a scientist, not an SF writer; see K. Eric Drexler's ***The Engines of Creation***.

The Ugly Hagling

A mini-adventure for any fantasy roleplaying system

by Timothy J. Turnipseed

"Daddy, I'm thirsty. Why can't I have some water?"

Naman Haftaxe tried to ignore his own thirst as he avoided his child's gaze.

Naman's wife, Sybil, took the young girl's hand. "You've already had your water for the day, sweetheart," she explained, "It wouldn't be fair for you to have more than the others."

"Get the child some water," Naman commanded, "She can have some of mine."

Sybil frowned. "Love, you can't keep giving all of your water away. You're no good to the village or your family if you swoon of thirst."

Naman was about to reply, but the mirror on the wall filled ominously with a dark, smoky haze.

Naman's muscles, weak from thirst, strained as he hefted a black axe from the table beside him. Sybil bent and tossed him a small silver hatchet, which he promptly snatched from the air with his free hand. The mirror cleared to reveal a beautiful elven maiden with shimmering ebon locks and smoldering emerald eyes. Sybil fearfully clutched the young child face first to her bosom to shield her from the vision.

"Naman, my love, " the maiden purred, "Will you at last see that justice is done?"

"Give us back our water!" fumed Naman.

The maiden melted into a gnarled old woman, her long hair stringy and wild, her eyes ablaze with fury, and her skin leathery. Her hands were tipped with long curved talons black as iron, and he knew, just as strong.

"Give me back my daughter," she snarled through a maw of yellowed, broken teeth, "or sate thy thirst with dust!"

"You go to hell!" he cried, and with a mighty blow, reduced the mirror to a shower of twinkling stars cascading across the floor.

The young girl began to cry.

"This ends now," Naman growled, and went for his armor.

"Wait!" Sybil cried, still trying to comfort their daughter. "You can't leave us! What if the bandits come back while you're not here to protect the village? What if she comes while you're away?"

Again, Naman's reply was interrupted: a glance out the window revealed strangers trailing dust on the village road. Naman of all people knew adventurers when he saw them.

So that idiot King had come through after all.

The following mini-adventure works best for a group of fantasy adventurers near the beginning of their career - one with just enough adventure under their belts to have earned a modest reputation.

Beginnings

The characters begin the adventure at the royal court, in the presence of the King (or another significant noble, as suits the campaign). Each has been summoned separately. When they arrive, there is the perfect opportunity for everyone to meet and get to know each other.

The King wants the party to help "an old champion of the realm" - Naman Haftaxe, a now-retired adventurer whose heroic exploits have become legend. Extremely moralistic, and fonder of the woods than of stone walls, Haftaxe is known to the party as a hero - it is even rumored that he turned down the throne on moral grounds.

According to the King, Naman has retired to a remote village far out on the kingdom's frontier. Haftaxe has asked the King for assistance in a matter of dangerous sorcery, and the King has elected to send a party of adventurers (the PCs!) to his aid. The King explains that Haftaxe's village is under a curse, and that he needs the aid of those familiar with dangerous sorcery. The King will provide horses and any reasonable requests for ordinary goods, as well as payment for each party member (roughly equivalent to three month's earnings as a skilled mercenary, each).

The Letter

As they prepare to embark on their journey the following day, a messenger approaches the PCs with a letter to be delivers to Naman Haftaxe. The letter bears the Royal Seal, but is otherwise unmarked on the outside. Nothing short of sustained torture will force the messenger to reveal that the queen (the King's elven wife) sent the letter. If the characters are so bold (and rude) as to open the letter or otherwise divine its contents, they'll find it intensely personal, a love-letter. The queen expresses her regrets to Haftaxe that she "made the wrong choice," and that she wants to take Haftaxe back . . .

Assassins!

At some point along their journey to Haftaxe's village, the PCs should be attacked - either by bandits along the roadside, or by assassins in the night. The exact nature of the attack will depend on what the party can handle: it should be enough to cause harm, but the PCs should survive (at least, killing *all* of them would probably be a mistake).

This attack serves two functions. The first is to warm the party up with a little physical conflict early on - there will be a lot of roleplaying later, and it's a good idea to keep them awake and sharp. The second (more vital) function is to introduce a clue: If the attackers are questioned, they know only that "Tarkan" wants them dead. Tarkan is known to any shady underworld types (or those who deal with them) as an infamous and very expensive assassin (or rather, the street-level code name for him).

The Village People

Upon reaching the village, the party meets the villagers, and their elder, Haftaxe, and his wife. Their 8-year old daughter, Mandy, is inhumanly ugly.

The party learns that the village well (and all the local streams) has been poisoned by a hag's curse. The villagers have been forced to catch rainwater in barrels, and the local rains have been less than enough to provide them and all of their livestock with enough water. The villagers want the party to seek out the hag deep in the forest and get her to lift the curse. If they can't convince her to do so through trickery or force, they want the hag killed (which they believe will also lift the curse). She is a murderess, they reason, and deserves no better.

Haftaxe himself wanted to deal with the hag, but the village has begged him not to. He is their only protection against

the bandits that have been prowling the roads in greater numbers than ever - and they fear that the hag might harm the village in his absence. They need heroes - but are afraid to risk the one they have in their midst.

The following information is available from Haftaxe and the villagers, and can be learned by interacting with the village and asking the right questions:

- The poisoned water is not deadly itself, but it is slimy, foul and bitter. More importantly, it does not quench thirst - in fact, it intensifies it. So far, four infants and three elderly citizens - seven villagers in all - have died.
- The name of the assassin leader given by the bandits is really the code name of the King's younger brother. (Haftaxe is the only person who knows this).
- Ranger Haftaxe and his wife have had two children, a boy and a girl. The girl was reportedly born while Sybil was away visiting her parents in a distant city, while the boy was born in the village. After the boy's birth, the village wise-woman revealed to Sybil that she could bear no more children.
- Mandy is spectacularly ugly, and the other villagers used to tease her unmercifully - even the child's own mother seemed to have no love for her when she was a baby. One day, a few seasons ago, the girl disappeared. The Haftaxes maintained that the child had gone to live with her grandmother. A year or so later, the couple's young son fell out of a tree he was climbing, broke his neck, and died. The mother, Sybil, was distraught and cried constantly. After about a week of this, Ranger Haftaxe set out on the road, returning three days later seriously wounded, but also with the girl. Sybil Haftaxe came out of her depression almost immediately, and has since showered the child with love. It soon became clear that anyone who teased little Mandy for her condition or allowed their children to do so would remain on the "bad side" of the village elder.
- One week later, many people in the village started having terrible dreams. The dreams came to different people on different nights, but they were all disturbingly the same. They dreamed that they were very thirsty, but standing by a stream. When they looked into the stream, they saw the reflection of a beautiful elf maiden instead of their own. But when they tried to take a drink, the reflection of the elf maiden melted into that of a hideous old hag. "Justice!" the hag shrieked through a maw of yellowed, broken teeth, "No justice, no water!" With that, the water turned bile green, and the strange dream ended. That same week, both the water in the village well and within miles of the village became foul.

The Elves

Between the party and the hag's cottage is a dense, dangerous forest. All sorts of woodland encounters can be found there, from benign to deadly. The GM should feel free to include whatever monstrous encounter the party might enjoys, but the PCs should eventually meet members of the Silverleaf clan of elves. From these elves, the players learn that Ranger Haftaxe had a relationship with the daughter of their leader, and that she was the elven archer/mage who accompanied the great ranger on many of his adventures. They had thought that she would marry him, but she ended up marrying the King instead.

The elves know the location of the hag's cottage. They avoid the place like the plague, and think the party mad for wanting to go there.

The Home of the Hag

Hidden deep in the forest near a murky pond, the hag's cottage is unguarded by man or beast, and cloaked in a dread stillness. Outside is a masterful woodcarving, which shows the Hag and little Mandy in a loving embrace. The hag's ugliness is a dead ringer for Mandy's own.

The hag is within, and will bid the party enter, if they knock. She was once part of a coven of three such hags, witches who worked evil on the land. Their evil was stopped when a party of adventurers led by Ranger Haftaxe killed the other two and their servants. Managing to escape with her life, the remaining witch assumed the form of a lost traveler on the road, appealing for sympathy to the same party which had slain her sisters. Her plan was to win the party's trust, then strike back in vengeance.

The plan would have worked - Haftaxe and his band took the disguised hag into their company to help her travel safely, and her act was so good that they became friends. Adventuring with Haftaxe, the hag had a change of heart, embraced goodness, and fell in love with Haftaxe . . . But his heart belonged to the elven maiden.

The hag, confused but determined to find her path in life, left the party and took up residence in a deep wood far out on the frontier - but fate brought the man she loved to the frontier village, and the hag was tormented. She started to send him dreams about his lost love, who was now the King's wife. Then one day, while he hunted in the wood, she came to him the form of his old lover, and seduced him. Afterwards, Haftaxe apologized to her and told her that he still loved his wife, that what they had done could never happened again. Angry at being rejected even in the form of the elf that Haftaxe had loved, the hag revealed herself as the traveler who had joined his old party, then assumed her true hag form. She managed to escape the furious Haftaxe, slipping into the woods as he raged.

Later, she revealed to him that their union had made her pregnant. Haftaxe convinced her that the child would be better off raised by humans, and the hag, eager to gain his favor, agreed. But the hag-child, Mandy, who was not yet old enough to change her form, met such horrendous prejudice that Haftaxe eventually brought her back to her mother. Not much over a year later, Haftaxe returned, demanding the girl again, but the hag refused to give up her child. The ranger secured Mandy by force, slaying many of her servants in the process. Indeed, the hag herself barely escaped with her life. The curse followed, the hag's revenge.

The hag has told the ranger that the waters will remain poisonous until her child is returned to her.

What's Really Happening Part I: The King

Because he fears that he is after his crown and his wife, the King hates Ranger Haftaxe.

When Haftaxe wrote a letter to the King requesting his aid, the King knew that he could not refuse to help such a popular national hero. So, he hired the party, bringing them to the royal court to show everyone that he was committed to helping the ranger and his village. But he also plotted their failure.

The king's brother (a master assassin) has already been busy wreaking havoc on behalf of the king, secretly leading the "bandit" epidemic, in a ploy to (a) terrorize the populace to keep them docile, and then grateful when the King "rescues" the kingdom from the problem, and (c) train groups of cutthroats into men who can later be used in the King's plans of expansion into neighboring kingdoms. The king decided it would be convenient for the PCs to die before reaching Haftaxe's village, so he asked his brother to do the work of it.

What's Really Happening Part II: The Elven Queen

She was the elven archer/mage who accompanied the famous Haftaxe on many of his adventures; they were friends and lovers. When the former ruler made Haftaxe the legal heir to his throne (he had no sons of his own), she was as delighted as the dukes had been furious . . . But Haftaxe soon became disgusted with "petty court politics" and wanted to leave, and he asked her to come with him. She declined, shocked at his "selfishness" and determined to keep a place for herself at court, to insure that her people were treated fairly, and to enjoy the lifestyle she had grown so used to. She won her place, permanently, by marrying the Duke that eventually won the right to the kingdom.

She has since regretted her decision, and thus the letter.

What's Really Happening Part III: Ranger Naman Haftaxe

This retired and much-loved adventurer was once the former King's most trusted advisor and heir, Naman found that his attempts to do good for the people of the kingdom were blocked at every turn by the deft political maneuvering of the entrenched aristocracy. Worse, he found it was nearly impossible to get anything done at court without blackmail or bribery, which he refused to participate in. Disgusted with politics, he retired to the edge of the Kingdom, heartbroken that his lover would not follow.

Resolving Things

This is a challenging set of troubles for any group to resolve, and there are many possibilities. The hag is determined to regain her daughter, Haftaxe is determined to keep the girl, and is confident that the hag will force the PC's hand and be killed. The queen is determined to win back Haftaxe, and the King is determined to keep the queen. It won't be long until royalty, in one form or another, visits the tiny village on the frontier. The villagers will be the victims trapped in the middle - unless the PCs save them.

The Wizard's Tower

A *GURPS* fantasy campaign

By David Moore

Art by Clifford VanMeter

As the sun rose over the landscape, the forest was strikingly still. No birds sang in the trees, no deer gamboled in the clearings. The gnarled, stumpy black finger of the tower jutted from the canopy, its shadow stretching far to the west, and throughout the lands that lay under its threatening gaze a death-like silence prevailed.

The pink dawn light entered the topmost room of the tower, illuminating the cloaked shape that lay crumpled by the door. The Sorceror had been walking into his workshop when he fell. It seemed that for all his powers over this world and the next he hadn't, in the end, been able to save his own ailing heart.

The clay golem that had been his manservant stood by his side. In six hours, the master still hadn't moved, and the golem was beginning to suspect he never would. It didn't really know what to do next. The imp Araxal fluttered into the room.

"Come, come, Fard, it's dawn already and there's not a hint of sulfur coming from the lab. You forgot to rouse the Master again, didn't you? He shall be angry now, and you know what -"

The tiny demon had seen the figure on the floor.

"Master?" he called, hesitantly.

"Master, did you fall?" Still, there was no answer. Aghast, Araxal looked at the golem's impassive face. "What - ?"

"He fell. I didn't know what to do." The golem's answer was utterly devoid of inflection, yet somehow despairing.

It added, somewhat unnecessarily, "I think he's sick."

"Oh dear," said the imp, distractedly sucking on his tail, "oh dear, oh dear."

He looked out the window, at the traces of civilization barely visible at the edge of the forest. "You know what will happen now."

The Ebon Sorceror has just died of a heart attack, leaving his Tower (with its library and workshop), an enchanted forest, and all his creatures unattended. The PCs are the golems, chimerae, spirits, undead and suchlike created or summoned by the Sorceror to act as guards, assistants, servants or companions. The spells which controlled and bound them have dissolved but, for some reason, those which animated, created or summoned them have not; and now that they seem to be free to lead their own existences, they have to decide what to do with their master's body, the tower, the forest and the outside world.

The Creatures

Characters may be designed with the aid of ***GURPS Compendium I***, ***Fantasy Folk***, and ***Undead***, referring to ***Magic*** and the ***Grimoire*** for inspiration; a

100-point limit is probably acceptable. Disadvantage limits may have to be relaxed, as many undead or enchanted creatures have a range of significant drawbacks. Alternatively, the characters may be built using "Racial packages", so that disadvantages deriving from being a zombie, wolfman or whatever do not count against the 40-point limit. All characters may be assumed to have had a magical Unwilling or Reprogrammable Duty up until the start of play, but they are considered to have dissolved with the death of the Sorceror. For ease of play, several pregenerated characters (all made with "racial" packages) are provided here. Note that almost all these characters should be due for significant (-20 points or more) Social Stigma (Valuable Property, Barbarian, Undead, Servitor of the Damned, etc.). I haven't included such disadvantages here, as their social context is each other; Araxal is hardly going to take objection to one of his associates being a walking corpse, given that he himself is a servant of Hell!

Araxal the Imp (100 points)

ST 6/10 [0], **DX** 11 [-10], **IQ** 14 [10], **HT** 12/7 [0]

Speed 5.75, **Move** 4, 8 flying, **Dodge** 4, 6 flying.

Advantages
Imp (Racial Package: ST 6 [-30], DX +2 [20], IQ +3 [30], HT +2 [20], Extra Fatigue x4 [12], Fewer Hit Points x5 [-25], DR 2 [6], Magery 2 [25], Immunity to Disease [10], Unaging [15], Flight (Winged -*25%*) [30], Awareness [15], Dread: Churches and Ceremonial Artifacts [-10], Ugly [-10], Frightens Animals [-10], Inconvenient Size [-10], Reduced Move x1 [-5], Can be turned using True Faith [0], Subject to Pentagram, Banish and "Demon" spells [0], Vulnerability: 2d from Holy Water [-10]; Total 73 points)
Literacy [10]

Disadvantages
Callous [-6]
Compulsion: Scholarship [-5]
Curious [-5]
Duty: Hell, on a 6 [-2]
Edgy [-5]

Skills
Flight-11 [0], Acting-14 [2], Chess-13 [1/2], Occultism: Demonology-13 [1], Demon Lore-15 [4], Alchemy-10 [1/2], Illusion Art-14 [4], Thaumatology-15* [4], Theology-10 (Optional Specialization: Comparative Theology-16) [1/2], Research-15 [4], Latin-12 [1/2]

Spells* *(All bought for 1 point unless otherwise noted)*
Lend ST-14, Recover ST-15 [2], Simple Illusion-14, Complex Illusion-14, Perfect Illusion-15 [2], Illusion Shell-14,

Illusion Disguise-14, Independence-14, Light-14, Continual Light-14, Darkness-14, Shape Darkness-15 [2], Sense Foes-14, Sense Emotion-14, Fear-15 [2], Panic-15 [2], Foolishness-14, Forgetfulness-14, Madness-14

Quirks
Plays with his tail; Perches on Fard's shoulder; Dislikes the "outdoors"; Stammers when nervous; Eats cockroaches

** Includes +2 from Magery*

Araxal is a lesser demon, summoned and bound by the Sorceror to assist in his magic and researches; although the Sorceror wasn't exactly *evil*, he was essentially pragmatic, and was happy to use creatures like Araxal for his purposes. The Sorceror had always been a devoted academic, so Hell decided to send Araxal, a scholarly demon, to try and tempt him into intellectual pride and damn him with promises of secret lore. The problem is, Araxal has never made much of a demon; he would far rather spend a millenium in a library than entrap some poor mortal into eternal suffering. He has mostly enjoyed the research work to which the Sorceror has put him, and has been learning to play chess. Araxal isn't terribly eager to return to Hell, especially since he has technically failed his mission. Thus far, simply not returning appears to be working, but he doesn't know for how long...

Araxal is a two-foot-tall, leathery-skinned, winged humanoid with tiny horns and a barbed tail (no game value). His skin is gray, with rust-red splotches, and his eyes burn red. His face is a caricature of a human visage, with cruel lines around his mouth and a large nose. His Illusion Disguise spell is of little use for masquerading as human, but he has become quite adept at imitating cats, and ravens...

Fard the Golem (100 points)

ST 15 [60], **DX** 11 [10], **IQ** 8 [-15], **HT** 13/20 [30]

Speed 6, **Move** 6, **Dodge** 6, **Parry** Brawling 7

Advantages
"Claws" (Punches for thrust/crushing damage, or 1d+2) [15]
Extra Hit Points +7 [35]
Clay Golem (Racial Package: Doesn't Breathe [20], Doesn't Eat or Drink [10], Doesn't Sleep [20], Eidetic Memory [30], High Pain Threshold [10], Immunity to Disease [10], Immunity to Poison [10], Imperturbable [10], Injury Tolerance: No Blood, Brain, Neck, Vitals or Cutting or Impaling Bonus [50], Single-Minded [5], Unaging [15], Cannot Learn [-30], Doesn't Float [-5], Eunuch [-5], No Sense of Humor [-10], No Sense of Smell/Taste [-5], Slave Mentality [-20*], Soluble** [-20], Ugly [-10], Unhealing [-30], Unliving [-50]; Total 5 points)

Disadvantages
Intolerance: "Enslavers" [-5]
Pacifism: Self-Defense Only [-15]
Phobia: The Lab where the Master died [-5]
Sense of Duty: Everyone he knows personally [-10]
Truthfulness [-5]

Skills *(All points in Mental Skills count double, due to Eidetic Memory)*
Brawling-11 [1], Professional Skill: Laboratory Assistant-9 [2], Professional Skill: Manservant-8 [1]

Quirks
Affects some human mannerisms; Continues to clean and tidy the Master's rooms; Attracted to the philosophical idea of freedom; Only really trusts Araxal

** A diminished version to make Fard more playable. The "take initiative" roll is made on flat IQ (which in this case is still likely to fail; a generous GM may allow a further +2), not IQ-8, and Will rolls are at -2, not -6.*
*** A soluble character sustains 1d damage per 30 minutes from immersion, and takes damage from water-based (normally knockback-only) attacks such as the Water Jet spell.*

Fard is a clay golem, created to handle the more dangerous tasks in the Sorceror's workshop. More and more of late, however, he'd been required as a personal servant for the ailing wizard. He's a golem... he's neither especially bright nor particularly imaginative, but he's always been methodical. Since being freed by the Sorceror's death, it has somehow sunk in that Fard was held as a form of slave, so firmly controlled he wasn't aware of it. As a result, Fard now treasures his freedom, and that of others, highly, and is morally opposed to anything he sees which could be considered "slavery".

Fard is a heavy, 6-foot tall humanoid made of clay. His features have been carved, unfortunately rather coarsely, into those of a man, giving him a somewhat menacing, beetle-browed appearance. He wears no clothes and carries no gear. His skin is terra-cotta brown. One of the Sorceror's last commands was a peremptory one to "act more human", one which Fard is still trying to execute.

Cray, the Sergeant of the Tower Guard (100 points)

ST 15 [0], **DX** 12 [20], **IQ** 10 [0], **HT** 15/20 [0]

Speed 6.75, **Move** 3, **Dodge** 3, **Parry** Brawling 5, Broadsword 6, **Block** 6

Advantages
"Intact" Wight (Racial Package, see ***GURPS Undead***: ST 15 [60], HT +5 [60], Extra Hit Points +5 [25], Doesn't Eat or Drink [10], Doesn't Breathe [20], DR 2 [6], High Pain Threshold [10], Immunity to Disease [10], Immunity to Poison [15], Imperturbable [10], Injury Tolerance: No Blood [5], Night Vision [10], Single Minded [5], Temperature Tolerance x10 [10], Unaging [15], Bad Temper [-10], Bloodlust [- 10], Dependency: Lie in own tomb 8 hours a day [-60], Disturbing Voice [-10], Dread: Ceremonial Items [-5], Frightens Animals [-10], Intolerance: The Living [-10], Unhealing [-30], Weakness: 1d/5 minutes from Sunlight [-30], No Body Heat [-5], Pallor [-10], Sterile [-3]; Total 78 points)
Ally Group: 20 Undead Soldiers, on a 15 or less [30]*

Disadvantages
Overweight [-5]
Laziness [-10]
Bully [-10]
One Eye [-15]

Skills
Brawling-10** [1/2], Broadsword-12** [4], Shield-12** [4], Tactics-9 [2], Area Knowledge: Tower-10 [1], Leadership-10 [0]***, Stealth-13 [4], Running-12 [1/2]

Quirks
Smokes tobacco despite being dead; Ribs Grarrg about being a "werewolf"; Plays up the "mercenary sergeant" bit even though his "men" are all mindless corpses; Fancies himself a dab hand with the sword.

Gear
Cray is armored in chain mail torso armor (PD3, DR 4) with leather (PD 2, DR 2) arm and leg coverings and boots, and a pot helm (PD 3, DR 4) (remember to add Cray's own DR 2 to all these ratings). He carries a broadsword (2d+2 cut or 1d+2 cr) and small shield (PD 2). His total encumbrance, including Overweight, is over 90 pounds, for Heavy Encumbrance. Note that his Running skill, however, can bring his speed back up to 5, 6 with the +1 for sprinting, when he needs it.

** The base cost of this group is dropped from 20 to 10 before multiplying, because the average point value of his soldiers is below 0 points.*
*** Includes -1 for One Eye.*
**** Default from ST.*

Cray was a soldier, drummed out of the army on discipline charges, who turned to petty banditry and "adventuring" for a living. He came to the tower when hired to help a group of prospective tower-looters. Unfortunately, the expedition was a failure, and a scant few members of the party were able to escape with their lives, hounded to the edge of the Wood by the Loupi. Cray was not so lucky. The zombies dragged his carcass down into the dungeons and left him to rot. Instead, he rose the next night as a Wight, determined to take revenge for his death on whoever he met. He destroyed a few of the undead soldiers before the Sorceror confronted him and bound him into service, to lead the mindless undead and coordinated the defenses of the lowest levels of the tower. Cray has actually found his new unlife easier and more comfortable that his former life. At least there's always a roof, and he never gets hungry. Most of his companions are at least as strange as him, but he doesn't like the Loupi, and constantly antagonizes Grarrg.

Cray is a large, gruff-looking, overweight man with a short beard, and a patch over his missing left eye. Despite being undead, he isn't rotting, but appears pale and cold. His armor is mostly poorly-kept and rusty, but his broadsword is still in good condition.

Grarrg, the Captain of the Wood Guard (100 points)

***ST** 13 [10], DX* 12 [20], **IQ** 9 [0], **HT** 12 [20]

Speed 6, **Move** 6, **Dodge** 7, **Parry** Knife 6, Brawling 10

Advantages
Loupus (Racial Package: ST 12 [20], IQ -1 [-10], Claws [15], Combat Reflexes [15], Discriminatory Smell [15], Fur [4], Sharp Teeth (1d cut) [5], Silence x2 [10], Short Lifespan x2 [-20], Stress Atavism: Moderate, Common [-16]; Total 38 points)
Ally Group: 5 Loupi, on a 12 [20]

Disadvantages
Berserk [-15]
Hidebound [-5]
Lunacy [-10]
Sense of Duty: to Loupi [-5]
Stubborn [-5]

Skills
Area Knowledge: Wood-10 [2], Brawling-14 [4], Maneuver: Bite-15 [1/2], Maneuver: Hit Location (Brawling) +2 [2], Fast Draw: Knife-12 [1/2], Knife-13 [2], Leadership-10 [3*], Running-10 [1], Stealth-13** [4], Tracking-14*** [4], Wrestling-13 [4]

Quirks
Mutters to himself, disclaiming the incompetence of others; Large white mane; Prefers claws-and-teeth to knife; Identifies with animals more than humans; Uncomfortable about being indoors

Gear
Grarrg, despite his contempt for human things, dresses in a boiled leather breastplate (PD 2, DR 2), with light leather leggings (PD 1, DR 1) (remember to add DR 1 from fur). His arms and feet go uncovered. He is armed with a large knife (1d imp or cut).

** Bought up from ST Default.*
*** Silence can add +2 or +4 to Stealth.*
**** Includes +4 for Discriminatory Smell.*

When the Sorceror set up his tower stronghold in which to isolate himself while he pursued his studies, he foresaw the need for defenses out in forest, miles away from the tower itself. To this end, he found a pack of wolves in the forest and enchanted them, giving them humanoid form and intelligence and binding them to his service. The Loupi, as he called them, were brutally effective, fiercely loyal guardians. The alpha, a white-maned brute who chose for himself

the name Grarrg, took on the role of sergeant, coordinating the Loupi patrols.

Grarrg is a bulky, short, manlike beast with a muzzled face. He's covered in black fur except around his neck and the back of his head, which is shocking white. His moods are subject to the phase of the moon, a fact about which he is very sensitive; Cray mocks him for it, calling him a werewolf. Grarrg is a short- tempered, sarcastic and inflexible creature.

Terah, the Guardian of the Door (100 points)

ST 8 [-10], **DX** 12 [10], **IQ** 15 [30], **HT** 10 [0]

Speed 5.5, **Move** 5 floating, **Dodge** 7

Advantages
Air Spirit (Racial Package: DX+1 [10], IQ+2 [20], Doesn't Eat or Drink [10], Doesn't Sleep [20], Enhanced Move x1 [10], Innate Spells: Air Jet [1] and Whirlwind [1], Magery 2 [25], Unaging [15], Body of Air (Always On) [-30], Disturbing Voice [-10], Vulnerability: 1d from fire [-10], Subject to "Pentagram" spell [0]; Total 62 points)
Alertness +2 [10]
Literacy [10]

Disadvantages
Enemy: The Lord of Elemental Air, on a 6 [-15]
Extremely Curious [-10]
Low Empathy [-15]

Skills
Area Knowledge: Wood-14 [1/2], Hidden Lore: Elementals-15 [2], Magic Jet-15 [8], Thaumatology-13* [1/2]

Spells* *All bought for 1 point unless otherwise noted*
Sense Life-15, Sense Foes-15, Sense Emotion-15, Truthsayer-15, Mind-Reading-15, Mind-Search (VH)-15 [2], Lend ST-15, Recover ST-15, Simple Illusion-15, Know Illusion-15, Detect Magic-15, Identify Spell-15, Analyze Magic-15, Light-15, Continual Light-15, Flash-15, Sense Danger-15, Watchdog-15, Magelock-15, Sound- 15, Thunderclap-15, Air Jet-15 [0], Whirlwind-15 [0]

Quirks
Shifts color in response to her mood; Watches birds; Dances when she's alone; Always very direct; Intensely curious about food

** Includes +2 from Magery*

Terah is not an air elemental, but she is native to the Elemental Plane of Air. Her body is an amorphous cloud of smoke, although capable of creating limb-like tendrils for interaction with other airy beings. Terah was also the only one of the Tower's guardians not magically bound into service. A wandering exile, fleeing the servants of her former master and owner, the Air Lord, Terah entered the Sorceror's domain out of curiosity and agreed to serve him in exchange for his protection and help. Still a young spirit, Terah has no comprehension of human sentiment beyond what she can ascertain magically, but is eager to understand it better.

The Tower and the Forest

Thirty miles from north to south and only ten miles from east to west, the Shrouded Wood would scarcely have registered on maps were it not for its dark reputation. The villages of Iankirk and Two Sisters bracket it within twelve miles of each other, yet their inhabitants never meet; although it would take one afternoon's brisk walk

to cross it at its narrowest point, the locals will always take the two-day trek around it rather than venture beneath its brooding trees, even in the daytime. No-one hunts in the wood, either, as between its heavy atmosphere and the depredations of the Loupi few animals remain to hunt. A quick, cold stream runs south through the forest, passing within a hundred feet of the Tower before veering east through the village of Two Sisters.

The Wood is patrolled by a pack of enchanted wolves called the Loupi (see above), led by Grarrg. A standard Loupus has ST 12, DX 12, IQ 9, HT 12, Speed 6, Dodge 7 and Parry 9. He has the Loupus package, a 10-point Duty to Grarrg, Area Knowledge (Wood)-10, Brawling-13, Running-10, Stealth-14, and Tracking-14.

The Tower of Midnight nestles within the northern part of the forest, surrounded by the tallest, thickest trees in the wood. It is fifty feet tall, and made of a black stone which glistens unsettlingly. The front entrance opens into a spacious reception hall, now long gone to ruin. The furniture is smashed and rotted, the bookshelves pulled over, and the tapestries have mouldered. Various subtle exits lead into the old servants' quarters, from before the Ebon Sorceror dismissed his human servants. These rooms, like the reception hall, are unused and empty. Another exit leads to the stables built into the side of the tower. No horse has been within the tower in more than ten years, but the Loupi use the stables when they feel the need for shelter, and they are now lined with bones and furs.

Stairs lead up around the perimeter of the room to the Sorceror's own quarters directly above. These rooms are in better condition; Fard has diligently kept them in good order. The walls are covered in tapestries of the Tarot's Greater Arcana. Little in the way of arcane trinkets is available here; the most an invading party of "adventurers" will find in here might be Fard, who used to stand in the corner of the bedchamber when otherwise unoccupied. The passage further up to the laboratory is secret, hidden behind the tapestry of the Hermit, which hangs in the bedchamber. It is also protected by a trap, which unless disabled with a Traps-3 roll (inhabitants need not roll) fires a crossbow bolt upon the interloper with a skill of 13, doing 1d+1 impaling damage to a random location.

Up a narrow staircase is a full wizardly and alchemical laboratory. Any magic items with which the GM wishes to provide the players or tempt the NPCs should be in here. The center is a large Pentagram (cast at skill 21), carved into the stone and inlaid with silver. As the only inhabitants who could possibly enter the pentagram are the Loupi, this circle will prove more a hindrance than a help to the players. Further up is the Observatory, with its glass walls and

roof. The Sorceror died in here, and unless the players do something about him, here he will remain. The floor is inlaid with a representation of the zodiac, again in silver.

Underground, accessible from the reception hall by a trapdoor which was once covered by a now-rotten carpet, are the cellars which the Sorceror has converted into embalming rooms for his necromantic experiments. His undead servants, including Cray, hide here from the light of day. Cray, in particular, identifies the embalming slab as his "tomb" and must rest there through the daylight hours. The Zombies and Skeletons who live down here can use the models in ***GURPS Magic*** or those recently offered in the ***GURPS Undead*** out-takes; they are mostly armed with shortswords and shields.

The Campaign

This scenario is open-ended, designed to provide a starting point for anything from a one-night adventure to a years-long campaign. A list of impending threats to the Tower and its occupants is provided below; if the players get too cocky, throw more than one group at them at once. On the other hand, a more developed plot (or twistier complications) appeal to some GMs and players, so a list of plot threads follows that. There's also a lot of opportunity for caricature and comedy; the reversal of the traditional fantasy game is reminiscent of the early Discworld books. In the end, the game can incorporate whatever elements of strategy, stand-up fighting, introspection and slapstick the group desires.

The Antagonists

First of all, the Tower is one of the chief targets for local adventurers and mercenaries hoping for a bit of magical booty. The tower is regularly visited by small teams of thugs, armed to the teeth and wielding dangerous fire spells. These "heroes" rarely make it past Captain Grarrg and his diligent Wood Guard, but once they were in the Tower it usually took the Sorceror's direct efforts to flush the irritating men out. Now the creatures have to sort out such things themselves. I have too little room to include full descriptions of an example adventuring group here, but GMs needn't go to great effort in designing full characters; in fact, caricatures of the "character classes" from a Certain Other Game may help any GM aiming for a comedy treatment of this game. For example, a chain-mailed "warrior" or two with 15 in Broadsword and Shield and ST of 13 or 14; a "wizard" with a half-dozen spells - especially offensive Fire spells - at 15; a "rogue" with Knife, Stealth, Lockpicking, Pickpocket, Traps, and Climbing in the 13 to 15 range; and an armored "priest" with 14 in Axe/Mace and Shield, a ST of 12, True Faith, and Minor and Major Healing at 15. To emphasize stereotyping, effete elven archers and gruff dwarf axemen complete the set.

Secondly, the creatures have to contend with more organized forces from the temporal and spiritual authorities of the area. In the villages of Iankirk and Two Sisters, the people look to the tower with distrust, and blame the Sorceror for every sick cow or bad crop. A mob of irate villagers would be of little threat (ST 11, Polearm-12, armed with improvised pitchforks and whatnot), but could provide at least some distraction, and if too casually slain attract more serious retribution. The local king has long been under pressure to clear the forest, and representatives of the nation's religious sects have condemned the place, regularly petitioning that the godless forest be cleansed with sword and fire. Groups sent by the king or the church will be more direct; no "rogues" and most likely no wizards, either. Just small groups of identically-dressed, serious young men with the king's tunics, swords and shields (again, chain-mail, ST 13 or 14, Broadsword and Shield-15), or priestly robes, swords and shields (the same, and one or two with True Faith).

Finally, the rest of the magic community - other hermetic wizards and the Colleges of Magic - have cast avaricious eyes over the Sorceror and his Tower for some years. These formidable groups, with their spells and their scrying, are likely to be the first to notice the wizard's demise, and although they would be reluctant to assail its defenses themselves, they would most likely hire soldiers or thieves, accompanied by hapless lesser magicians or apprentices, to scavenge the place before other forces get at it. These parties would have much the same stats as "adventuring parties", except that the College would most likely have armed them with magic items of protection, and perhaps forewarned with some scryed information as to the tower's layout and defenses.

Complications

Araxal's diabolical masters have waited long enough for him to report in. What if they turn up and start to cause

trouble? This might be as simple as requesting, or demanding, Araxal's immediate return to Hell. In that case, the other creatures will have to decide how loyal they are to the little demon; will they help him hide on Earth, or leave him to his own fate? At it's most extreme, this idea could lead to an adventure in Hell, as the other creatures help Araxal escape his disgruntled employers. Conversely, Araxal's masters might insist on placing another wizard in the tower, one which they'll have more success in controlling. How will the PCs deal with the new necromancer? Their freedom would be in jeopardy only days after they had acquired it. Or Araxal could, however accidentally, have *succeeded* in his mission to damn the Ebon Sorceror, who has since been conscripted by Hell and sent back to occupy his own body as an undead magician. Only now he's corrupt and evil, and the players, still free of their one-time magical bonds, have to go among the people and convince them of the impending threat without getting killed. They may even have to confront their old master...

Terah's history may likewise start troubling her. If a pair of Air Elementals arrive to start threatening her, it will prove almost impossible (in the author's limited view) for the players to offer her much protection. Players, however, constantly surprise; considerable cunning or planning may make it possible to at least discourage the elementals. As with Araxal, above, Terah could actually be captured, and some sort of quest into the Elemental Plane of Air to rescue her could be in order. The greatest trick would be convincing some poor sod to get them there.

Maybe the Ebon Sorceror's not really dead. Having gone on an astral sending or vision, he might be upset to return to his tower and find that his faithful creatures have buried and/or cremated him. A spectral Sorceror, trying to get revenge on his hapless creations, could be an imposing foe. He may, for that matter, not return. Alerted to his continued life by a desperate, garbled psychic message, the PCs could have to go on an adventure to rescue his trapped spirit from the demon or evil mage who's holding it captive. Alternatively, the Ebon Sorceror could have cast a Soul Golem spell (***GURPS Grimoire***, p.42) and transferred himself to Fard, whom the GM has retained as an NPC. Meanwhile, the Sorceror is accompanying the creatures as they try desperately to keep things from falling apart, mildly curious as to why the magical bonds no longer hold them all. His sudden revelation as a ***Deus ex Machina*** in the closing moments of absolute disaster would offer a serious conflict for the players, as would all of the threads in this paragraph: will the players return to serving their master? Having tasted freedom, who would wish for slavery?

On a more frivolous note, the GM might actually allow the players to negotiate reasonably and peacefully with the various forms of trouble approaching the tower ("we'll agree not to eat you if you agree not to raze us" or "take all the treasure you like, but do you really need 12 XP for killing me?"). This opens up a whole new avenue for harassment ("I'm sorry, but we've lived our whole existences in a magical tower. What is this 'tax' of which you speak?" or "what do you mean, 'compensation'? I'm a wolf; we eat sheep!"). The players could have fun thinking up ways in which their particular abilities could be turned to responsible use in society, and the tower could eventually become known as a haven for people, creatures and things which... don't *belong* anywhere else. They might, mind you, not cherish such fame. This is a particularly appropriate way to run this adventure in a ***GURPS Discworld*** setting, following some of the ideas in ***Reaper Man*** and later books.

by Phil Masters

Art by Ashley Underwood

Horror-game investigators break into the houses of cult leaders, fantasy warriors carve their bloody swathes, net-runners rip off data, and superheroes fly below legal heights.

Crime is commonplace in RPGs. Sometimes, PCs fight it, sometimes they commit it; they may make careers out of either. Most often, they do a little of both; fictional "adventurers" tend to play fast and loose with rules while following some kind of moral code, and generally help stop other beings whose actions are blatantly immoral and unlawful.

So refs must ask themselves; what is the nature of crime and law enforcement in their world? There can be a lot of variation in this, and different legal systems can make for significantly different scenarios, but if you don't have *some* idea how and why the law works, players are likely to have problems suspending disbelief.

Committing Crimes

The first law of laws for a ref is simple; *Laws exist for a reason*. The exact reason can vary, but it's usually primarily to keep someone (or something) safe. In a "nice" society, that "someone" will be the population in general (although in some democracies, this can mean that the majority passes laws that oppress minorities such as adventurers or wizards). In a tyranny, it will be the people on the top of the heap. In a theocracy, it may be the gods and their temples; in a faceless dystopia, it may be "the system," or the computers that run it. There may be a few laws that don't serve this purpose, left over from past history, but by and large, if a law doesn't serve a "good" purpose, somebody will want to change it.

This doesn't necessarily mean that every written law will be properly enforced. In a "dark future" or "grubby medieval" setting, there may be laws against murdering peasants, and thousands of lower-class bodies in the gutters. But this simply shows that the *nominal* purpose of the law is not the same as the *actual* purpose. Try molesting one of the overlords, and you'll soon discover whom the law exists to protect.

(And even if there *isn't* a working system of law, people are likely to respond to provocation. One reason for having laws is to prevent campaigns of private revenge, which tend to lead to never-ending cycles of bloodshed.)

In game terms, this means that PCs shouldn't be allowed to get away with murder, literally or metaphorically - at least, not on a regular basis. If they harm someone that the law is designed to protect, or break a law in sight of a law-enforcer, then the ref should have a good reason for them not to be pursued. And if they have special powers or skills that keep them ahead of pursuit, there's a very good chance that the powers-that-be will start thinking about counter-measures. And the authorities usually have massive resources, good advisers, and either public opinion or some tough bruisers on their side.

Investigation and Pursuit

Legal systems will usually be fairly well adapted to making sure that the laws are applied. This doesn't mean that all criminals are caught; in the modern world, vast numbers of crimes aren't even reported, let alone properly investigated, and a society in which *every* crime gets solved would be hard to imagine (and probably very scary). But if a law is being openly flouted daily, or if the law doesn't *ever* protect whom it's meant to protect, something will be done. The laws may be changed - or the enforcers may just look for better ways to enforce them (or at least, to *look* like they are enforcing them).

Assuming that the malefactors aren't seen and pursued the moment they commit a crime, someone, somewhere, will probably investigate it. This is good for game purposes, because it leads to all sorts of "mystery" and "fugitive" scenarios.

Mystery plots with the PCs playing detective are hard (though *not* impossible) to run in RPGs; clues are easy to miss, while magical spells, super-powers, and advanced technologies short-circuit many questions. If it's the PCs being "detected," however, the question is slightly different. Can they be tracked down by the techniques available? How well have they covered their tracks? Are they up against the Keystone Kops, Judge Dredd, or Inspector Morse?

The investigators are usually "police" or "guards." True police are a modern idea - invented in Victorian London - but some kind of enforcement has been needed, as long as there have been laws. It has often been the duty of every adult to pursue anyone accused of a crime, but, generally, small communities have appointed some kind of "watchman" or "sheriff." In larger communities, this job may be handled by the army - but soldiers have other duties, and may not be too well-trained for policing, and in any case, "troops on the streets" may be seen as a sign of tyranny. Some societies, such as Ancient Athens or Ottoman Turkey, organised squads of foreign slaves, who could be guaranteed not to have local loyalties, to keep order. In other cases, the job fell to guards employed by judges out of the court budget. Others again simply had a rag-bag of semi-official "thief-takers" hired by the citizenry. What Sir Robert Peel created was a disciplined, non-military organisation which was usually well enough chosen and paid not to fall into corruption, and which could handle routine enforcement *and* detective work.

The chief (official) investigator will usually be a mid-ranking policeman, or "watch captain;" in a system with strongly "Inquisitorial" trials (see the next section), it may be the local "magistrate." More powerful figures (chiefs of police, local lords, etc.) may take an interest, especially if important people have been hurt or killed, but they don't usually investigate themselves; they have other worries, and their main plot function should be to put pressure on harassed detectives.

All sorts of people may assist the investigators, from lowly constables who provide muscle, to forensic scientists or specialist wizards. In a superhero game, heroes with super-senses or telepathy may have an important role. Combat skills, on the other hand, only become useful if things get complicated, or if a pursuit occurs after or instead of an investigation.

Pursuit scenarios are more fun for players with a less cerebral approach to RPGs, who may not be much good at investigations - but that doesn't mean that they have to be simply dumb chase scenes. They are especially interesting if the PCs are the quarry, either because they didn't commit the crime and are trying to remain free long enough to find proof, or because they did but they are "honourable rogues." This pits the huge resources and man-power of the authorities against the skills and heroism of the PCs. *Combining* pursuit with investigation can make for an especially tense and complex situation - see *The Fugitive*.

The Trial

If and when some characters (PC or NPC) are actually arrested for a crime (rightly or wrongly), many people may assume that it's all over bar the painful bits. Smart refs (and John Grisham) know better.

No doubt, in very early times, once the tribe decided who had broken the rules, they just thumped the miscreants, kicked them out of the area, or whatever. But the first time somebody yelled "that's not fair," and somebody else said "okay, let's sit down and talk this over," humanity had a trial system. And the next day, when everyone started telling each other who'd won the argument, we had court-room thrillers.

There are a lot of ways of organising trials, and a lot of differences between legal systems, but at the most basic level, there are two formats; *Inquisitorial* and *Adversarial*.

An Inquisitorial trial, as found in many European countries and beyond, is intended to find out What Happened. In other words, it's part of the investigation; at the end, hopefully, it will find out who, if anybody, committed the crime, if any, at which point the court can pass sentence. The judge is the chief investigator. Of course, there may well be a clear suspect from the very first, and no-one goes to the trouble and expense of setting formalities in motion until the investigators have gathered at least basic information - but that's just a matter of convenience. In abstract theory, if not always in real-world systems, the court could find anyone guilty of any crime, although if radically new evidence turns up, the trial will probably be stopped while everyone adjusts.

An Adversarial trial, as found in the UK and the USA, starts from a different point; someone is accused of a specific crime, and the trial is a contest between the accusers and the accused. The judge is there as a referee; a jury may decide the winner. Although the system can be flexible - a murder charge might be reduced to one of manslaughter, say - the result that matters is the "yes" or "no" answer, and it will be out of the question for anyone but the initial accused to be found guilty; if it turns out that a different person committed the crime, then a new trial will be needed.

Of course, how these models actually work in different societies varies immensely. In a tyranny, an Inquisitorial judge may go round torturing people to find the truth, while an Adversarial trial will be a rigged contest, designed to ensure the "right" result. In a modern, mass-media-saturated setting, the judge may end up having to work full time to preserve the dignity of the court, while lawyers spend their time manipulating the press. In a futuristic society, the judge might actually be a computer - supposedly completely impartial, unflappable, and all-knowing.

But however warped the system, even in a tyranny, if there is a system of trials at all, it shows that the government wants to maintain the appearance of fairness. This can lead to scenarios full of tension and characterisation, as PCs struggle to make the system obey its own rules - preferably aided by a handful of honest lawyers, judges, or jurors. In other systems, tyrannical or not, law enforcement can become corrupt, and the prisoner, guilty or innocent, must concentrate on buying, talking, or finagling their way out.

Courts tend to be formal, intimidating places. In some cases, officials may try to make things as comfortable as possible for participants, but this isn't universal; in ancient Chinese law, for example, a trial is a sign of the breakdown of the sacred social order, the court's first job is to frighten anyone from letting things come to such a pass, and the judge may well actively seek to ensure that *someone* is punished - if not the criminal, then a lying witness or whatever. Furthermore, the criminal *must* confess before the trial ends - so torture *may* be used to ensure this.

Even a system which starts out trying to be fair and humane can become so complex and formalised that it becomes hellish; the classic example is *The Trial*, a novel by Franz Kafka, a surreal nightmare partly based on the bureaucracy of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, in which "Joseph K," accused of a crime, ends up trapped in a maze of procedures. K's situation is probably too bizarre to serve as an RPG scenario - except in *Over the Edge* - but a sense of Kafkaesque nightmare might give PCs some incentive to work especially hard to escape from a frame-up. Or, as in the movie *Brazil*, it might persuade a character to think about joining a revolution.

Lastly, note that different conditions breed different systems. One game example is given in ***GURPS Supers***, which

describes a "Three-Telepath System," designed to incorporate telepathy reliably into criminal justice. A high-magic society with a commitment to justice might invent something similar.

Punishment

Once the accused is found guilty, the court must assign a penalty. Usually, this means that the judge chooses from a range of options set by the law, perhaps taking note of comments from the jury, but other parties may have an input; for example, Islamic law often allows the victim or their family to demand compensation or more or less severe punishment.

In the Middle Ages and earlier, corporal punishment - floggings and amputations - was the norm; after all, prison couldn't be much worse than many peasants' normal lives, and cost a lot of money to run. (Prisons to hold suspects waiting for trial tended to be horrific, although rich prisoners could sometimes bribe the warders and bring in luxuries.) Today, in the West, such things are seen as barbaric; however, in parts of the Islamic world, where the law is seen as coming from the Word of Allah, these old-style punishments survive. (Note that they have usually only been applied for substantial thefts. Also, stealing certain items that were banned or despised by Muslim law, such as wine or musical instruments, was sometimes not punished at all.) Being locked in the stocks for the public to pelt you with rubbish (or, if you were unlucky, in some places, stones) was another form of corporal punishment.

And another was *branding*. Again, this seems barbaric to modern sensibilities, but it had clear advantages; it could mark out a known criminal, so that, wherever he or she went, possible victims would know to be on their guard. Because of this, people who had been mutilated or scarred by accident would sometimes carry official certificates to prove that they *weren't* criminals. Some stories in the *Arabian Nights* feature characters who get beaten up in one place, go somewhere else, and then find themselves treated as villains because of their scars. (The modern idea of "electronic tagging" is meant as a gentler way to control criminals' "visibility.") This could make scars gained in the course of legal adventuring a real liability for PCs.

In seventeenth and eighteenth-century Britain, punishment involved rather a lot of capital punishment (very popular with the public, who like to see "bad people" suffer). Prisons were still relatively too expensive to serve as a punishment (and so sordid that diseases often killed a lot of the warders, as well as the prisoners). However, not every criminal could be hung, and the growth of colonialism offered an alternative; the crown would remit the sentence in exchange for the prisoner's providing useful labour in the colonies. After a while, the courts gained the power to impose sentences of "transportation" themselves. At first, the destination was America; after the American Revolution, Australia became the replacement. Transportation wasn't necessarily for life; many prisoners were allowed home after a few years, but others settled, and formed the basis for successful new communities. (Modern Australians are especially proud if they can trace their ancestry back to the "first fleet.") This system lasted until the mid-nineteenth century; something similar could be used to interesting effect in an RPG, with, say, a colony land full of strange beasts and native magicians, or an SF "prison planet."

But slowly, prison was adopted as the modern, humane approach. High-minded rulers and reformers like to believe that "penitentiaries" can reform criminals (which annoys people whose main wish is to see evildoers suffer); however, such punishments haven't always been *kind*. Some prisons held criminals in solitary confinement, to meditate on their sins without giving each other ideas. This often just drove the prisoners mad. A futuristic (or magical) dictatorship that keeps its iron fist inside a velvet glove could take this idea to an extreme, brainwashing prisoners and destroying their capacity for independent thought. (Alternatively, see the world of George Orwell's *1984*, which doesn't given a damn about reform, but which cannot tolerate *any* dissent.)

Prison scenarios should be a tough prospect in all but the most light-hearted, unrealistic RPG campaigns, unless the system is corrupt and the PCs are rich. (A GM wishing to run such a thing for just a few sessions could always have the PCs "infiltrate" a prison to obtain information, or to aid a friend or employer to escape.) Although they might represent a chance to acquire some underworld contacts and learn a few dubious skills, they will mostly see PCs sandwiched between tough professional criminals and guards who are very likely to be cynical, and maybe downright sadistic. That leaves them with few options; unless they want the sordid fun of becoming the toughest gang in the prison, they should be looking to prove their innocence (real or not), or to break out.

But unless they run a long way, they are still in trouble. Because breaking out of prison is against the law...

***I Am the Law!* - Some Fictional Law Enforcers**

Name: Judge Dee.
Source: Novels by Robert van Gulik.
Character: Dee is a career official in Ancient China, responsible for justice in a series of cities; a judge in an Inquisitorial court, with limited technology but great ingenuity. He fits the Confucian ideal; stern, moral, and just, but compassionate.
Tactics: Dee is primarily a thinker, assisted by a small group of guards and assistants who provide muscle and special skills.
Quote: "This is the complete plan for the Rebellion of the White Lotus! But unfortunately all the names of persons and places are written in code..."
Similar Characters: Judge Fang, in Neal Stephenson's *The Diamond Age*, is almost a futuristic version of Dee.

Name: "Dirty Harry" Callahan.
Source: Films starring Clint Eastwood.
Character: The archetypal "renegade cop," Dirty Harry is tough, dedicated to justice more than law, and carries a big handgun.
Tactics: Harry is an uncomfortable cop. He prefers to get the job done reliably, and doesn't mind blowing away a few "punks" on the way. He looks like a hero because the crooks he's chasing are even nastier than him, if not as tough. A similar NPC could be bad news for law-breaking PC heroes.
Quote: "Go ahead, punk - make my day."
Similar Characters: A lot of other characters owe Harry a debt, especially the heroes of many Hong Kong action movies. Judge Dredd ("I am the Law!"), in *2000 AD* and elsewhere, is a futuristic version - a superhumanly tough enforcer trying to keep the lid on a society gone mad, either the last hero in an insane world, or an ultimate fascist thug, depending how you look at him. The trouble with Dredd as a character model, however, is that he doesn't have much character - he mostly serves as a hook for plots and a straight man for satire.

Name: Inspector Morse.
Source: Novels by Colin Dexter, and TV programs based on them.
Character: Morse is a career policeman/investigating detective. A typical "thinker," he is quiet and often hard to like; as a sensitive character dealing with the aftermath of crime and violence in a fairly realistic setting, he is gloomy and not very fond of other people. Like many fictional detectives, he has a clutch of outside interests to prove his sensitivity - in his case, classical music and crosswords.
Tactics: Morse uses deduction and his knowledge of human nature, along with official resources and forensic science, to determine who committed a crime; Sergeant Lewis, his sidekick, handles many practical matters.
Quote: "Quiet, Lewis - I'm thinking."
Similar Characters: Commander Adam Dalgliesh (created by P.D.James) has much the same qualities. Many fictional detectives are thinkers, although the majority (like Sherlock Holmes, the archetype) are freelance.

Name: Captain (later Commander) Vimes.
Source: Guards! Guards! and later novels by Terry Pratchett.
Character: A comic parody of the archetypal honest copper driven to drink. Vimes later sobers up, marries well, and is given control of law enforcement in his city. He is shrewd rather than brilliant, conscientious, and secretly idealistic. Real evil makes him irritable.
Tactics: Vimes is primarily a practical sort of thinker, who can improvise his way through dangerous situations if he has to. He knows his city, and has a fair idea of human nature (although its worst aspects depress him).
Quote: "I've never believed in that stuff - footprints in the flower-bed, tell-tale buttons, stuff like that... Policing's luck and slog, most of the time."
Similar Characters: Other comedy policemen tend to be "Keystone Kop" clowns, or plodding dolts; Inspector Clouseau is a classic example. However, many fictional private detectives and secret agents have some capacity for humour.

Name: Deputy Marshall Gerard.
Source: The Fugitive (film).
Character: A cool professional with a laid-back humour that comes from complete self-confidence.
Tactics: Gerard is ruthless, *very* meticulous, observant, a crack shot who always carries at least two weapons, and leads an efficient team of agents from the front. An opponent in Gerard's class should have even the cockiest PCs running scared.
Quote: "What I want out of each and every one of you is a hard-target search of every gas-station, residence, warehouse, farmhouse, hen-house, out-house and dog-house in that area..."
Similar Characters: Capable, realistic police characters appear in a number of stories. However, other fictional manhunters tend to be freelances, such as the superheroic Batman.

. . . For a Crime They Did Not Commit . . .

A pixie hero wakes up to learn that the house of Alderman Fatwad has been burgled through a cat-flap, and the Alderman has been left with a teenie-weenie sword in his throat. An Investigator breaks into a Cult Temple, only to discover that the cultists saw him coming and dialled 999. Doctor Brainwave persuades the (NPC) Defenders of Justice to have a little chat with the (PC) Nightwardens, who are showing up as suspects on the new police computer system (programmed by Brainwave Incorporated)...

As if actual PC law-breaking isn't enough, PCs can be accused of things they *didn't* do; there's nothing like a little self-righteous indignation to encourage player-to-character identification. Using too many "frame-up" plots can look like gratuitous persecution, but for one-off scenarios, or as a way to start a campaign, they have many advantages.

The PCs' enemies may plant false evidence. A crime may (apparently) have involved the use of special powers that only the PCs are known to possess. Adventurers, who are probably known as capable people with a relaxed attitude to rules, make good scapegoats for clever crooks who want to misdirect the authorities. And sometimes, characters are just in the wrong place at the wrong time. Perhaps the authorities don't actually give a damn about real guilt or innocence; they just want somebody to string up, to show that they are tough on crime. And the sad fact is that many people are more interested in seeing *somebody* punished for a crime than they are in seeing the *right* people punished.

"Frames" happen in stories ranging from *The Count of Monte Cristo* through *The Fugitive* to *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?*. Fictional villains are devilishly ingenious; realistically, investigators are mostly used to simple cases, are usually overworked and under pressure, and rarely bother looking for a complicated solution when a simple one is available. (In heroic fiction, this sensible approach is the sign of bumbling, dim-witted police.)

At this point, the PCs can either surrender, then work within the system to prove their innocence, or go on the run, and either leave the area or - preferably - find the real criminals. The former is easier if some of the PCs or their close friends weren't implicated, but can get a little boring for the PCs who are locked away. (Or their fellow prisoners can make it unpleasantly exciting; see the comic series *Watchmen*.) Fighting a frame while in prison is perhaps the trickiest type of investigative scenario - but if the PCs start with a few good clues, and use their contacts well, it can be made to work.

Notes and Asides

"If conspirators meet in the house of a tavern-keeper, and these conspirators are not captured and delivered to the court, the tavern-keeper shall be put to death."
- *The Code of Hammurabi, 2500 BC.*

Once, English law had a rule whereby no-one could be prosecuted for a serious crime without a "grand jury" deciding that there was a case to answer. This was supposed to prevent the Crown prosecuting people maliciously. However, in practice, grand juries tended to rubber stamp prosecutions, and the expense and hassle of the system mean that it only survives in the USA, where it's written into the Constitution.

The theory behind *Trial by Ordeal* was that God (or the gods) would help an innocent man win a fight or survive some injury, whereas the guilty would be struck down. If it appears in a game-world, it is up to the ref to decide whether any gods really do intervene, or whether the verdict goes to the best fighters.

Trial by Jury seems to be an English invention, based on old ideas of a tribe or village giving its opinion on a case; modern juries are usually twelve randomly-chosen citizens. (Other nations did have something similar, however - ancient Athens could see juries of up to 500 citizens.) The idea hasn't proved very popular outside the English-speaking world.

Innocence isn't always a defence. Characters in games such as *Paranoia* or *The Skool Roolz* (*arcane*, issue 3) should always be treated as guilty of *something*.

Capital punishment can take many forms. The Romans went in for crucifixion, torturing criminals to death, while other convicted offenders have been hurled off cliffs, strangled, drowned, beheaded, or stoned. Burning usually seems to have been a response to especially hated crimes, such as heresy or witchcraft (although not all witches were burned). Perhaps the commonest idea was hanging (killing with a broken neck if the victim is lucky, by strangulation if not). The modern-day USA, with its love of technology, has created the electric chair and lethal injection.
Under Medieval Islamic law, stealing items worth a quarter of a gold dinar or more was punished by cutting off the right hand; repeat offences would mean loss of, first the left foot, then the left hand, then the left foot. Punishments in Europe at that time could be even more extreme - and the laws of evidence in Europe were a lot less precise.

The Inquisition was a medieval Catholic religious court, designed to root out heresy. Originally, it was (on its own terms) quite fair, but Inquisitors soon took to torture and persecution. Under the infamous Torquemada, with the support of fanatical monarchs, the Spanish branch extended its authority to other crimes, and helped persecute the Jews; even the Pope couldn't control them. They had the power to arrest and torture, and to impose many punishments - although offenders had to be handed over to the civil authorities for the death penalty.

(Note: This article first appeared, in a slightly different form, in issue 17 of the now-defunct magazine arcane, *in March 1997.)*

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by Matt Riggsby

Late in the Middle Ages, the European economy finally began to recover from events ranging from the collapse of the Roman Empire to the Black Death. This economic revival, accompanied by a revival of Classical literature, became the Renaissance. Almost everyone has different dates for the Renaissance; this article covers the period from the early fifteenth to the late sixteenth centuries. The center of the Renaissance was Italy, and one of the centers of Italian civilization was the City of the Flower, Florence (in Italian, *Firenze*). As a center for international trade, political intrigue, and a new spirit of intellectual and artistic adventure, Florence can be a great location for adventure in an historical or low-tech fantasy campaign.

Florence and the Renaissance

The Renaissance was a time of intellectual, artistic, and economic activity. The word *Renaissance* , as well as the idea of a "Middle Age," was coined by the scholars of the period who believed themselves to be involved in the rebirth of a spirit of inquiry and philosophical exploration. They contrasted themselves favorably with the Medievals, who occupied an unenlightened period (from the Renaissance point of view, at least) between the Classical age and the new era.

One of the driving forces of the Renaissance was the economy. Trade through the Mediterranean and into Europe was as strong as or even stronger than it had been during the days of the Roman Empire. Artists and architects, funded in large part by a new class of wealthy merchants, were creating an explosion in art. Many artists attempted to emulate Greek and Roman architecture and sculpture, while others experimented with new techniques such as perspective drawing.

A scholarly movement known as *humanism* was also gathering strength. The humanists were most interested in secular philosophy and human achievement. Unlike Medieval scholars, whose work was almost exclusively Christian, the humanists based their work on the pagan scholars and poets of Classical antiquity, and they worked tirelessly to find lost Greek and Roman works. The humanists didn't reject the Church or Christianity (several prominent humanists were churchmen), but they were interested in more than just Christian subjects. In addition to being a center of trade, Florence was a center of scholarship. Although its university wasn't as prominent as the schools of Padua and Bologna, most newly recovered works made their way quickly to Florence.

The Renaissance was also a time of chaotic politics. At the beginning of the Renaissance, Florence was dominated by the Guelfs, a political faction that was conservative, aristocratic, pro-Church and had been anti-German during the years of heavy German influence in Italy during the later Middle Ages. Now, however, the Germans were less relevant to Italian politics, and the Guelfs were fragmenting. Political rivalries, assassinations, and riots were carried out in every Italian city by pro- and anti-clerical factions, the poor against the rich, rival families, and factions for or against other foreign powers, particularly the Spanish and French. Recurring bouts of the plague also swept through Europe every generation or two until well after the Renaissance, throwing things into confusion.

Geography and Land Use

Florence lies in eastern Tuscany, about half-way between Rome and the "fan" at the top of the "boot" of Italy, just west of the Appennine mountains. It sits astride the river Arno, about forty miles upstream from the nearest port, Pisa. Like the rest of Italy, Florence has hot, dry summers and mild winters, although snow is not entirely unheard of. It sits on fairly level ground and is surrounded by a small plain, although the land becomes very hilly to the east.

The city, or at least the area protected by the city walls, is about a mile and a quarter across at its widest extent, along the Arno. Like most walled cities, Florence was very densely built up to make the most of the limited land inside the walls. The walls were surrounded by an area of suburbs quickly giving way to fields and scattered villages. Florence's suburbs extended farthest along the courses of the roads leading into the city. In addition to fields, woods, tiny monasteries and villages, the countryside was dotted with the villas of Florence's aristocrats. The typical villa was a combination farm and country retreat, where wealthy urban merchants could go to relax and play at being rural noblemen.

At the dawn the Renaissance, just after the end of the Black Death, Florence's population was about 50,000, not nearly enough to occupy the entire area inside the walls. At this time, some of the city's land was probably used for recreational gardens or small-scale agriculture. However, within a few generations, the city's population rose to somewhere between 75,000 and 100,000, leaving only a few patches of open land, essentially public parks and gardens, within the walls.

History

Although the site of Florence may have been occupied by Etruscans, the core of the city was a Roman foundation. When the Roman Empire collapsed, authority over the Italian peninsula went with it, but the idea of the city as the basic unit of society remained. Florence was inhabited continuously through the Middle Ages and, in the twelfth century, became a commune, ruled more or less by the consent of its inhabitants rather than by a bishop or a nobleman.

Towards the end of the Middle Ages, Italy's chaotic political scene began to settle down into five major centers of power: Venice, Genoa, Rome, the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies (Sicily and southern Italy, ruled from Naples), and Florence. Each had its own source of wealth and power; Venice dominated trade with the east and hosted a fabulous glass-blowing industry, while Rome was the center of the Catholic Church (now just past the height of its influence, but still by far Europe's greatest power). Florence emerged as the center of an international banking system. Florentine bankers financed the armies of kings, allowed merchants to transfer money safely, and provided financial services for the Church.

Albizzis and Medicis

In the early years of the fifteenth century, Florence was involved in a series of expensive wars. The Florentines conquered Pisa, securing themselves a port at the mouth of the Arno, but went on to suffer a series of crushing defeats at the hands of the Milanese. Riots and demonstration threatened the sitting regime controlled by the Albizzi family. The Albizzi identified as their chief enemy the Medicis, a rising banking family led by Cosimo di Medici. Despite his fabulous wealth, Cosimo dressed simply, was never seen with more than one servant, and represented himself as a man of the people rather than an aristocrat, which gave him tremendous popularity among the lower

classes. He was also a patron of the arts and supported a number of humanist scholars, whom the leaders of the government regarded as anti-religious.

The Albizzis managed to have Cosimo exiled, but Cosimo had foresightedly transferred much of his wealth from Florence to his bank branches in Venice and Rome. Between the demands of the public and ample bribes provided by Cosimo in exile, the Albizzis and their allies were turned out of power in 1434 to be replaced by friends of the Medicis. The Medicis' opponents were quickly exiled themselves, marking the start of the Medicis' long dominance of the city.

Despite its republican appearance, Florence was ruled by the Medicis from then until 1495. Their power, however, was unofficial. Although Cosimo was Florence's de facto ruler, he continued to avoid the trappings of aristocracy and only once held office, being selected *gonfaloniere* for a single term. Cosimo preferred to operate behind the scenes, using his wealth and popularity to have his allies appointed to high offices and intimidate his enemies.

Under Cosimo's rule, Florence strengthened its ties with France in their diplomatic struggle against Spain and entered into the Peace of Lodi in 1454. The treaty didn't stop wars in Italy, but for forty years it kept the wars small and the major powers more or less at peace with one another. It also led to the first resident ambassadors in European history, exchanged by the Italian powers to promote negotiation and keep the peace. Despite periodic challenges, Cosimo ruled the city until his death in 1464, followed briefly by his son Piero (d. 1469), then his grandson Lorenzo, called "the Magnificent" (d. 1492). Both followed Cosimo's policy of indirect rule, but they indulged in more expensive tastes and ruled more openly. The Medici family employed, at one time or another, most of the important artists of the era, including Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci, whose home town lies a few miles to the north of Florence.

The Medicis Stumble

Late in the fifteenth century, the Medicis' strategy showed its weakness. A series of bad loans by the Medici bank and the inept rule of Lorenzo's son Piero led to a drop in Medici popularity (despite their control of the government, the Medicis could never control popular sentiment). Worse yet, this came at a time when relations with France were at a low point. Charles VIII, the French king, led an army through Italy to attack Naples. On his way, he occupied Milan and attempted to do the same to Florence. Although Charles decided not to hold the city, he did take control briefly and drove the unpopular Medicis out in 1495.

Charles had a number of reasons for leaving Florence behind, but popular opinion held that the credit belonged to a monk named Savonarola. Savonarola was an extremely charismatic preacher with an education in philosophy and visions of an apocalyptic future. He led a tremendous religious revival and became the effective ruler of the city, turning Florence, in the words of one contemporary, into a vast monastery. The Jews were expelled, and an army of children went everywhere in the city looking for signs of sin and heresy. Eventually, Savonarola went too far by attacking the pope and, by his policies, hurting business, earning the enmity of both the Church and the upper classes as well as alienating many among the common people. As his following declined, the regular government regained its power, and in 1498, he was arrested, tried, and burned at the stake in the midst of another round of riots.

The years that followed were not good for Florence. The Peace of Lodi was broken, chronic warfare returned with the Italian cities used as pawns by France, Spain, and Germany, and Florence itself had no able leader. The Florentines managed to recover Pisa but lost battles elsewhere and were forced to pay off several mercenary armies that ravaged Tuscany and threatened the city itself.

The Medicis Come Back

In 1512, a Spanish army briefly occupied Florence, bringing with it the return of the Medicis in the person of Giuliano di Medici. Giuliano wasn't a descendant of Cosimo; rather, he was descended from Cosimo's younger brother Lorenzo, after whom Lorenzo the Magnificent had been named. This delighted the Medici partisans left behind in 1495, and the commoners were won over by immense gifts of money hurled from the windows of the Medici Palazzo. They were driven out again in 1527, but reinstalled by a joint Spanish-Papal army in 1530. Shortly thereafter, Allesandro di Medici was named Duke of Florence.

This generation of Medicis was more involved in international politics than in banking. In 1513, Archbishop Giovanni di Medici, Giuliano's brother, became Pope Leo X, followed in 1523 by their brother Giulio, who became Pope Clement VII. Duke Cosimo I, Allesandro's son, was made Grand Duke of Tuscany by the Pope, putting him on a near-equal social footing with the kings of France and Spain and the German emperor. Catherine, great-granddaughter of Lorenzo the Magnificent and the last direct descendant of the first Cosimo, left Italy to marry Henry II, the king of France. Catherine was, if anything, an even more formidable politician than her ancestors Cosimo and Lorenzo and, like her great-great-great-grandfather, she had a talent for ruling behind the scenes. Through her husband and, later, her sons (the kings Francis II, Charles IX, and Henry III), she was effectively the ruler of France until her death in 1589.

Despite the success of the Medici family, Florence was past its prime. Florence's peculiar tradition of popular rule was dead and the city's unique identity was blurring as it became the capital of Tuscany. Rather than being an independent player, it was a junior partner to a Spanish-Austrian alliance against France. And though it remained a center of art and high culture, it was no longer the center of the wave of creativity and new scholarship sweeping Europe. For Florence, the Renaissance was over.

Politics

From the Middle Ages until 1530, Florence was a republic. At this time, as in much of world history, that only meant rule by a group of people rather than by just one. Participation in Florence's peculiar and confusing government was determined by a mix of ancestral privilege, membership in professional organizations, and chance. Government offices were open to a relatively broad range of people, but hardly any governmental officials were elected, and power was distributed among a number of councils and offices to ensure that no one person could completely control the city.

Florence was divided into four quarters, each of which was subdivided into four neighborhoods called *gonfalons* , or standards. Each gonfalon had its own name and symbol: for example, the Dragon, the Ladder, and the Lion. The gonfalons were so called because each one had a different standard around which people would gather in times of emergency (traditional neighborhood standards are still maintained in modern Siena). Each quarter produced two senior magistrates, called *priors* , and three junior magistrates, called *buonomini* . These twenty magistrates, along with a chief magistrate, the *gonfaloniere della giustizia* (standard-bearer of justice) formed the *Signoria* , the city's law-making body. These officials were chosen at random for two-month terms. The names of members of the major guilds whose fathers or grandfathers had held office, who were not related to current or recent office holders, and who did not owe the city any debts were written on slips of paper and pulled from an urn or purse. Election fraud, in Florence, consisted of influencing the clerks who maintained the lists of names. Government officials were not paid, but they were maintained in lavish style in the *Palazzo della Signoria* and could use their influence to benefit their regular occupations.

The requirements for office excluded clergy, noblemen, peasants, the urban poor, and much of the middle class. Ultimately, about four percent of the population was eligible for office. Nevertheless, the common people were not without power. Particularly unpopular legislation or attacks on popular individual led to public protests and riots. Since there was little effective crowd control, the Signoria could be intimidated by a popular uprising.

The Signoria was supported by (or, sometimes, opposed by) a number of lesser officials. The Signoria employed a

notary, who kept official records of meetings and made official announcements, and a chancellor, who kept track of correspondence. There were junior councils, with memberships from eight to two hundred and fifty, that the Signoria had to consult on particular issues (for example, warfare or product regulation) or held special judicial powers.

There were also several important positions reserved for non-Florentines from cities at least fifty miles away, an innovation meant to ensure that some government officials could be neutral to the city's internal rivalries. These include the Podesta, the chief magistrate for wills and civil lawsuits, the Captain of the People, a sort of chief of police, and the Executor, whose job was to thwart schemes of the aristocracy that might hurt the people.

All of these councils and officials, often at odds with one another, ultimately accomplished very little, but did it as loudly as possible. They held endless acrimonious debates which could easily come to blows. The power of government was frequently used by office-holders against their familial, business, and political enemies. If one faction gained an upper hand, it could vote to banish its enemies and use its influence in the courts against any opponents that lawsuits could be brought against. However, since terms of office were short and officials were chosen at random (at least, where sitting officials didn't interfere with the lists), exiles could be and often were recalled quickly.

Economy and Industry

During the Renaissance, Florence was the center of Europe's banking industry. At this time, banking was a service only for wealthy merchants, rulers, and the Church. The poor and middle classes didn't have enough money to make it worth the banks' while to deal with them. Also, deposits to a Renaissance bank were more like short-term loans than modern deposit accounts. There were no checks and no more than one branch in any city, making it difficult, or at least tedious to get money for day-to-day expenses.

For wealthy travelers, governments, and senior clergymen, however, bank services were a vital service. Instead of carrying gold and gems, which are untraceable, one could deposit money in one bank and carry a letter of credit (identifying the legitimate bearer) to the next branch. If the letter is stolen, the thief can't cash it, while the bearer can simply go back for another one. Banks could also, for a small charge, exchange foreign currencies for native coinage, necessary for traveling merchants and dignitaries of all kinds just as it is for modern travelers going from one country to another.

Despite their power, banks of the Renaissance were minuscule by modern standards. A branch consisted of a room furnished with a few desks for clerks, a strongbox or two for cash on hand and confidential records, and a table (banco) covered by a carpet, on which business was done. The main office of a large bank was likely to employ less than ten people, and a branch office at most four or five. Moreover, each bank only had a few branches. Five branches would constitute a large bank, while ten would be immense. At its height, the Medici bank probably didn't directly employ more than fifty or sixty people.

Florence was a major transshipment point for a number of exotic goods. While it was not a port, it saw considerable

traffic in gemstones, spices, dyes, and medicines. Most of them were carried by Florentine or other Italian merchants, but a merchant might bring a Slavic silversmith or Turkish doctor with him to help evaluate the goods.

In addition to commerce, Florence was the home of a profitable textile industry, producing a considerable amount of wool and silk. The fibers themselves were mostly imported from elsewhere (wool from England and northern Europe, silk from the east), but spun, dyed, and woven into cloth in the city, or rough cloth was imported and processed to turn it into finer ware.

Although peasants still outnumbered city-dwellers (probably two or three to one), the Renaissance economy was fairly monetized. Just about everybody in the city expected to be paid monetary wages, and workers were hardly ever paid with goods.

Religion

Even during the height of the Reformation, Florence, like most of Italy, remained staunchly Catholic. Three percent of the city's population was composed of clergy at the beginning of the period, almost twice as much as most other places, and that percentage grew slowly through the period. There was hardly a street without a small church or chapel. Every guild had a patron saint, and wealthy men demonstrated their wealth and virtue by paying for new churches and renovations of old ones. Protestants could be imprisoned or exiled.

Still, while the Florentines loved their religion, they didn't trust the Church. Indulgences (fees for forgiveness from sins) turned the Church into a marketplace, and the politicization of the papacy made it easy to sneer at the spirituality of the Church leadership. Corrupt priests and monks were commonly the butt of jokes and targets of mob violence, and while the Pope placed Florence under interdict several times during the Renaissance, Florence's priests could often be persuaded to celebrate Mass and hear confession anyway.

Florence had a resident Jewish community, who, except for a few episodes under Savonarola, appear to have encountered no great anti-Semitism. In fact, Florence was a great center of Jewish learning and Hebrew scholarship. Presumably, cosmopolitan Florence would welcome well-behaved Muslim visitors. If the government is strongly humanist, practicing pagans, who would be quickly killed through most of Europe, might find a winking acceptance as long as they weren't too open about it, particularly if they worship the Greco-Roman pantheon.

Arms, Armor, and the Military

The organization and armament of Florence's army is easily described: there wasn't one. In addition to being a great time for art and scholarship, the Renaissance was the golden age of the mercenary. Unlike the feudal lords of the Middle Ages, the city-dwelling guildsmen and merchants who came to power in the Renaissance had no military tradition to uphold, nor much training at arms. They did, however, have a lot of money. Therefore, instead of forming armies, they hired them. The wars of the Italian Renaissance were fought with mercenary companies composed largely of foreigners, sometimes (very rarely, in the case of Florence) supplemented by the civic rulers' personal troops or a civic militia. This added an additional danger to war; a mercenary army might desert to a higher bidder, flee the employers they feel no loyalty to, or even turn against their employers and seize power for themselves. Unemployed mercenary companies often turned to banditry and were notorious for ravaging the countryside. If Florence was directly attacked, residents of the sixteen neighborhoods were expected to form impromptu militia units, but they had little regular organization. Machiavelli, who recognized the danger of mercenary armies, tried to train the militia as the core of Florence's defense, but his army quickly collapsed in the field.

Because of the growing use of guns, heavy armor was falling into disuse and light, fast swords were becoming viable weapons. Fencing styles of the period often involved having something in the off hand: a buckler, an armored gauntlet, a knife, or a second sword, the last being "Florentine style" fencing. It would be a bit peculiar to see someone on a city street wearing armor unless he was acting as a guard or otherwise clearly expecting trouble, but not at all unusual to

see wealthy young men wearing swords.

Guns were still largely confined to professional soldiers. They were slow to reload and inaccurate (rifled firearms were still centuries away), but they were cheap enough to allow devastating volley fire. Gunners were specialized troops, generally mixed with formations of pikemen and cavalry armed with lances or sabers. Plate armor, at the height of its refinement, was losing its effectiveness to larger firearms, but was perfectly good against melee weapons and small caliber guns. Most soldiers wore some armor if they could buy or loot it, but, since most primary weapons were two-handed, shields had largely fallen out of use on the battlefield.

What It's Like . . . Buildings

Most buildings within the city walls are made of brick or, in poorer areas, mud brick, with wooden or tile roofs. Expensive buildings, including churches and the palazzos of the wealthy, are made from stone. Building laws discourage wooden buildings and prohibit thatched roofs, both of which pose severe fire hazards. The typical building is three or four stories tall, but high ceilings are common if the builder can afford them. A three-story palazzo might be sixty feet tall.

Buildings are mostly unpainted or perhaps stuccoed, but they may be decorated with flowers or banners indicating political, religious, or familial affiliations. Windows are tall and narrow. They are typically covered with panes of oiled linen, which lets in light but keeps out weather, but may be glazed in wealthier homes. Doors are often elaborately carved and decorated.

In contrast with their plain facades, buildings can be very elaborately decorated inside, particularly churches and the homes of the wealthy. Rooms may be decorated with paintings, tapestries, and statuary, and ceilings by painted frescoes, perhaps depicting heaven or the stars of the night sky.

A feature of architecture all over the Mediterranean is that almost every building or, at the very least, cluster of small homes, has at least one courtyard with rooms built around it. People sleep and, generally, cook indoors, but most work and entertaining take place outside. The courtyard provides a cool, shaded place away from the noise and traffic of the city streets. In larger buildings, courtyards are often surrounded by sheltered walkways and, in tall buildings, a ring of balconies as well. Large buildings will have small balconies facing the streets and piazzas as well.

Corridors aren't a common feature during this period (hallways don't become popular until the eighteenth century); rooms connect directly to other rooms. Renaissance buildings also don't have built-in closets, although many people have large wardrobe cabinets that perform the same function and are almost as easy to hide in.

Streets, Walls, and the River

One of the most important things about the streets of Florence is that they are crowded. The city is packed with people, and during the day, they're all busy. Shopkeepers sell their wares outdoors, porters and draymen carry goods everywhere, apprentices and servants run errands for their masters, and wives and unmarried sisters go shopping for groceries and household goods on a daily basis. It is almost impossible to do something outdoors in Florence without someone seeing in daylight hours, or hearing at night. ***GURPS Goblins*** has some excellent advice on playing in a crowded city.

The cobble-paved streets are narrow by modern standards. Most are wide enough for two horses or a wagon to pass comfortably (say, 6 to 10 feet), but little more. A few major streets are wide enough for two wagons to pass each other, but city planners of this period often kept streets narrow intentionally; narrow streets are easier to block off and defend in times of invasion. Traffic

is made more difficult still by the practice of treating the street in front of one's house like a front porch. People work, socialize, and watch life go by from their front doors. Sidewalks haven't been invented yet, but the streets may have gutters to carry away rainwater.

The walls of Renaissance Florence are the city's third set, originally built in the thirteenth century. The earlier Medieval and Roman walls have vanished by this period. This set is about thirty feet tall, with seventy to eighty foot towers at 325 yard intervals. The defensive towers, like all of Florence's towers, are square. Late in the Renaissance, as the need for defense became less pressing, the towers fell out of use and were eventually pulled down to provide housing. There is also a moat around the city walls, filled by water diverted from the Arno.

The banks of the Arno are as heavily built up as the rest of the city. Rowing down stream, one would see homes directly facing the water, water wheels powering grain mills and small textile factories, steps leading down to landing platforms, and ramps leading directly into the water to facilitate getting small boats into and out of the water. The walls not only surround the city, but also follow the course of the river into the city for two hundred yards or so at either end to defend against water-borne attackers. As in many Medieval and Renaissance cities, the bridges are as heavily built up as the streets. The Ponte alle Grazie and the Ponte Veccio are both lined with houses, shops, and small churches.

Clothing

Clothing is a good indicator of social class. The lower classes wear plain-colored clothing, usually black or brown. A typical outfit is a long hooded cloak with sleeves, a shirt, a belt, hose, simple boots, and a simple brimless cap. Members of higher classes wear similar outfits, sometimes augmented by tight-fitting jackets, but more colorful clothing. The cloth is often finer (the wealthy can wear silk), and fringed with fur or tassels in particularly fine garments. Low-class toughs wear sleeveless cloaks, while military men wear capes. The middle and upper classes will also wear a variety of chains, ribbons, and colorful buttons.

Food

Wheat bread forms the core of any diet and is the symbol of food itself. Indeed, the word "company" comes from the Italian phrase *con pane* (with bread), which was used to describe an association of people to ate together. Wine is also consumed in quantity. It is not necessarily drunk to get intoxicated; rather, wine is typically safer than many water supplies.

In the upper and middle classes, dishes are often heavily flavored with spices. Pepper, cinnamon, and other spices are still relatively new and cooks experiment heavily. Sugar is used much like a spice as well. Pasta has been introduced

to Italy and is popular in the upper and middle classes, but it won't become a staple of the Italian diet until semolina flour becomes relatively cheap, early in the nineteenth century. Florentines were among the first people in the world to use forks at the table, which are not, at this point, commonly used elsewhere.

Languages

There are several dialects of Italian at the beginning of this period (for example, Sicilian, Neapolitan, Roman), although largely through the influence of Florence's bankers and politicians, the city's dialect of Tuscan became the dominant dialect of Italian by the end of the Renaissance. In ***GURPS*** , such dialects default to each other at -2. Because of a high level of international trade and French, German, and Spanish involvement in Italian politics, all of those nations' languages are readily available.

Latin is the international language of the church, the dominant language of philosophy and scholarship and the preferred language for writers. Any even vaguely serious scholar or poet will know at least a little, and a good priest may even speak it. Florence was also a center for Jewish scholarship, so Hebrew is available.

Greek was not well known in western Europe at the beginning of the Renaissance. A few scholars owned books written in Greek, but complained that no one could read them. However, it became more well known around the 1450s, as the last wave of Byzantine scholars fled Greece in the face of the Turkish advance.

Characters playing travelers from far away could know Arabic and Turkish if they come from the Ottoman Empire or North Africa, or Polish or other Slavic languages if they come from Eastern Europe. While merchants who travel to India and points farther east may know a little of the languages spoken there, such language skills will be extremely rare.

Where To Go, What To See, and What To Do

The skyline of Renaissance Florence (and that of modern Florence as well) is dominated by the hundred-yard tall dome of the Duomo (#1 on the map below), Florence's grand cathedral. Through most of the Renaissance, it is the biggest Catholic church in the world, becoming second only to St. Peter's in Rome at the end of the sixteenth century. Unlike most other Gothic-period cathedrals, it does not have enormous stained-glass windows or gargoyle-decorated flying buttresses. Instead, it is encased in white marble and has just a few small, if exquisite, windows to keep the inside dim and refreshingly cool during the day. The southwest corner of this cross-shaped building (the bottom right corner of the cross) has a square, 90 yard tall bell tower.

The Palazzo di Signoria (2) is the home of Florence's legislature. In addition to office space and a meeting hall for the Signoria, it has quarters for its members, their servants, and supporting officials. It is a fortified four-story building with a tall watch tower at its center and it lies across an L-shaped plaza (a popular space for demonstrations) from the Mercato Nuovo (5), a covered marketplace. The nearby Piazza della Republica (4), one of Florence's largest open spaces, is another popular spot for demonstrations and is surrounded by several other public buildings.

Florentines enjoy a number of sports. The city has no stadia; games are played in the piazzas, cleared of people and covered with sand. Despite their republican pretensions and reluctance to actually fight, wealthy Florentines staged jousts. Football (calcio) is played occasionally, although the Renaissance version is very different from any modern sport. Like soccer, the ball is always in play until a goal is scored. Like American football, it is legal to carry and throw the ball. However, teams are huge: twenty five to twenty seven men on a side. Pushing, kicking, and punching other players are all allowed in order to get the ball and score a goal. During Carnival, young men of the city's leading families would gather in the Piazza Santa Croce (8) and play a game that attracted huge crowds, which was even played when the city was besieged in 1530.

Horse races are popular, and they do not necessarily lead through the countryside. Race courses sometimes head down the narrow, winding city streets as well. Usually, the race course is cleared, but impromptu racers might have to plow

through surprised crowds. Chess and dice are also popular games.

In addition to having no stadia and racetracks, Florence has no theaters. It does, however, have a growing theatrical tradition. The religious mystery plays of the Middle Ages are giving way to secular plays written by humanist playwrights, often in imitation of Greek and Roman originals. Like sports, plays are performed in the piazzas or on open land.

Using Florence in a Campaign

Swashbuckling

This is the period that gave us the word swashbuckling. Florentine politics provides many opportunities for duels and casual sword fights, while Florentine architecture provides plenty of balconies to climb and chandeliers to swing from. If adventure takes players to sea, perhaps trading with the Ottoman Empire and parts east, they may have to deal with North African pirates and privateers commissioned by rival Italian cities.

Blood and Steel

Given the predominance of small units of mercenaries in Renaissance Italian warfare, this is the ideal setting for a low-tech military campaign. Characters will be able to travel all over Italy and fight every kind of military action from ambushes to defending a besieged city against everything from armored knights to musketeers to rabble armed with rakes. Good mercenaries will have constant employment, while bad ones will have to supplement their income by other means. Mercenary PCs in a military campaign aren't likely to live in Florence (they probably won't be Florentine, and even if they are, they'll spend most of their time in the field), but they may pass through to negotiate a contract or be financed by a Florentine bank.

Fantasy

Adding magic to a Renaissance campaign should be easy. After all, most fantasy campaigns, with banks, easy travel, monetary economies, spyglasses, and primitive gadgetry, are already more Renaissance than Medieval. As a center of scholarship, Florence is a natural place to expect magical learning. Book sellers may carry tomes of mysterious Cabalistic lore or Arab alchemy texts, humanists may discover magic on their own (many were interested in alchemy), and the marketplaces may have stalls trading in dragon skin from China or even live gryphons and unicorns.

For GMs with a more classical bent, one of the best-known magicians in western literature is Florentine. Prospero, the exiled sorcerer of Shakespeare's "The Tempest," was previously Duke of Florence. A Medici schooled by alchemists could easily become a sorcerer-duke.

Horror

As the humanists search for new knowledge, they will inevitably discover Things Man Was Not Meant To Know. Like many European cities, Florence sits atop a Roman foundation and has extensive Medieval catacombs under its cathedral, the Duomo. No doubt, the living will do something that will upset the dead.

H. P. Lovecraft mentioned a Greek edition of the *Necronomicon* printed in Italy during the first half of the sixteenth century. If it wasn't printed in Florence, a copy of it would at least make its way there, and perhaps it had something to do with an outbreak of plague that preceded the return of the Medicis. If the GM would rather deal with people than Things, Vlad Tepes, later known as Dracula, lived from 1431 to 1476. In the mid-fifteenth century, characters may meet a vicious Wallachian count visiting Italy. In later campaigns, they may have to deal with a brand new vampire

Weird Science

Thanks to Leonardo da Vinci and the humanist traditions, which opened the way to the birth of the scientific method, a Renaissance campaign can see all kinds of anachronistic technology: ornithopters, submarines, automatic weapons, tanks, steamships, sunlight-focusing burning beams, and just about any other mechanical device or alchemical miracle the GM wants to use. Although da Vinci's sketches have been used as the basis of weird science in a number of movies (*Hudson Hawk* and *Young Sherlock Holmes*, for example), his devices have rarely been shown in a Renaissance setting. A Renaissance weird-science campaign would have much in common with a steampunk campaign. Gibson and Sterling's *The Difference Engine* and GDW's ***Space 1899*** RPG may provide some useful ideas.

Further Reading

Cultural Alas of the Renaissance , C. F. Black et al. (eds.)

Daily Life in Florence in the Time of the Medici, J. Lucas-Dubreton.

Florence: The Biography of a City , Christopher Hibbert.

The Prince , Niccolo Machiavelli. Probably the world's most read work of political philosophy, it nevertheless failed to get him a job with the Medici dukes. Despite his excellent advice for dictators, Machiavelli was, at heart, a republican.

The Divine Comedy , Dante Alighieri. Technically Medieval, but very relevant to the Florentine Renaissance. While his heavily Christian work (written in mere Italian, no less) didn't endear him to the humanists, he was immensely popular with everybody else. Every Florentine will be able to quote at least a little Dante.

Orlando Furioso , Lodovico Ariosto. A magical epic written by Allesandro di Medici's resident poet, and a distant ancestor of the modern fantasy novel.

Ariosto, Chelsea Quinn Yarbro. A peculiar story that switches between fictional episodes from the life of Ariosto and an epic tale he is writing.

Queen Margot (dir. Patrice Chereau, 1994). An award-winning French film based on a novel by Dumas, touching briefly on the last days of Catherine di Medici.

http://www.italink.com/eng/egui/ - A tourism site with pictures of Florence's important surviving Renaissance buildings.

More adventurous souls can go to the nearest large library and look for Library of Congress numbers starting around DG734.

MAP LEGEND (Florence, circa 1490)

1 Duomo
2 Palazzo (Palace) di Signoria
3 Medici Palazzo
4 Piazza (Plaza) della Republica
5 Mercato Nuovo
6 Piazza S. Maria Novella
7 Santa Croce (church and plaza)
8 Ponte alle Grazie
9 Ponte Veccio
10 Ponte S. Trinita
11 Ponte Vespucci
12 Park/garden

[map]

by Phil Masters

art by Dan Smith

The Githiaskio are a race of intelligent aquatic sophonts (also known as Squids, or "Whooiihee" in imitation of their whistling speech); they originated on a planet on the coreward edge of the Imperium. Physically, they are radically different from the human norm; psychologically, they are remarkably similar.

Biology

The Githiaskio are bisexual, semi homeothermic (maintaining their body temperature within a broad range), and give birth to single, live young. They average 6' 8' in length, about half of which is tentacle, and are about 18" in diameter at their broadest point. They have roughly cylindrical bodies, which taper into a muscular swimming "fluke" at one end and divide into six tentacles around a feeding orifice at the other. A cluster of sensory organs is located mid way along the body. Githiaskio vision is biased towards the blue green end of the spectrum, having evolved for life underwater, but their eyes focus poorly; their prime sense is sound, which encompasses a very effective ability to locate objects in their immediate vicinity by low frequency echoes and fluctuations. They are very sensitive to strong light and to waterborne chemicals.

Githiaskio speech has been described as "whistling underwater." It is complex and subtle, relying heavily on pitch intonation. Githiaskio and humans can learn to understand each other's speech to a reasonable extent (in ***GURPS*** terms, treat each race's languages as Mental/Very Hard skills to the other), but neither can speak the other's language without mechanical aid, except on a very primitive basis (attempts are at 10). This problem is complicated by the fact that one language is spoken underwater, the other in air. Most mixed human Githiaskio teams carry one or more synthesizer translator systems that permit swift, simple communication; these are TL 9 technology (but are generally only available off the shelf on worlds with a significant Githiaskio population), cost about Cr1,000, and weigh about 10 lbs. They require Electronics Operations skill to set up and maintain if built at TL 9 or 10; more advanced versions are trivially simple to use (and give much better, colloquial translations).

Githiaskio require oxygen for respiration; worlds with a thin or better atmospheres are usually acceptable. They can tolerate a fairly high salinity in their water, but certain chemicals make conditions intolerable for them. The presence of an atmospheric taint often means problems; basically, they will require complex and expensive protection in the waters of any world with a tainted atmosphere (let alone if it is corrosive or worse), unless the GM decides otherwise (roll 3d if you want a random determination; the water will only be tolerable on 5 or less).

The race can tolerate depths of up to 700 meters at 1G, although sudden drops in pressure create problems similar to the sort of dangers suffered by careless human divers. Higher pressures require the use of cumbersome protection. Githiaskio bodies have just lighter than neutral buoyancy; they float to the surface if unconscious, but can maintain position with trivial effort, and do so reflexively when sleeping.

Githiaskio exposed to air suffer physical irritation, developing into pain, and finally death through dehydration and suffocation. The process takes only a few minutes. Even if an enveloping "wet suit" is available, a Githiaskio removed

from the support of water can suffer severe internal injuries unless provided with a complex supportive sling (or an expensive, complex gravitic technology substitute); only zero G conditions remove this requirement.

History

Githiaski, the Githiaskio homeworld, is a rather mineral poor planet on the fringe of the Lesser Rift; the First Imperium seems to have paid it little attention, for its intelligent inhabitants were only discovered by a merchant ship during the Long Night. Their name for their planet can best be represented as *Llaaaiihoin* (with a heavy vibrato on the first syllable, and a high pitch on the last).

As the world has few, small continents mostly consisting of salt marshes and swamps, regular contact with the Githiaskio came only with the rise of the Third Imperium. As scientific study focussed on the race, their evolutionary history came to light.

Githiaski's seas teem with life, but forms analogous to vertebrates have never appeared; rather, the dominant phylum has developed a supportive inner "cage" of gristle like material. The Githiaskio's ancestors may have resembled those Terran marine worms which bury themselves in the seabed, leaving only a bundle of tentacles exposed; their closer relatives were certainly squid like in external form.

The Githiaskio evolved from omnivore scavenger gatherers, inhabiting shallow seas with a fairly profuse growth of marine vegetation; intelligence seems to have appeared when a period of heavy volcanic activity produced repeated shifts in marine currents and serious water pollution. The small family groups of Githiaskio were forced to closer co operation and wider searches for food; intelligence became a key survival feature. The parallel here with human evolutionary history is certainly interesting, particularly as this ancestry has produced creatures so intellectually similar to Humaniti that human psychoanalysis will work on Githiaskio.

When contacted, the Githiaskio had developed a sophisticated culture, but had not developed a high technology civilization because of their lack of metals (which are effectively impossible to refine or work underwater). Their skill in stonework and the use of vegetable fibers was considerable, however, and is still admired. Since the Imperium expanded into their region of space, they have become valued (if independently minded) citizens, trading their services as water dwellers for high tech items and information that have enabled them to advance remarkably quickly.

Society

When first contacted, the Githiaskio had developed several distinct, complex societies, some with Tech Levels rising as high as 3 in some areas, but lacking metals (except for the very occasional naturally occurring nearly pure lump). Various aquatic animals had been domesticated, and sailing vessels had been developed (with submerged hulls and rigging above the surface). The major cultures still display distinct identities, but dealings with the Imperium have encouraged the

development of a coordinating bureaucratic organization with some power over the various nations. The language of the largest pre contact nation has become effectively universal across the species. Nonetheless, Githiaskio societies are no more fit subjects for generalization than are their human equivalents.

Aware that they need imported technology to build and to maintain an advanced society, the Githiaskio have produced organizations dedicated to earning interstellar currency. Thus, the world has a small but well advertised tourist industry, and Githiaskio are frequently found working off planet in underwater jobs of all kinds, in zero G work (at which their aquatic background makes them adept), and in academic posts.

Githiaskio are fully aware of their status as a "Minor Race." Some individuals become aggressively touchy on the subject, asserting that they are "as good as anyone else," or even claiming that the "Major Races" are decadent and unworthy, while a few others display inferiority complexes, treating humans as superior beings, or becoming morose and depressive when they contemplate their history. Most Githiaskio, however, just get on with their lives; should a human be so crass and obnoxious as to challenge them on this subject, they will (more or less) politely point out that an accident of biology and history left them unlikely to achieve space flight, perhaps mention some of their culture's most admired artists or philosophers, or suggest that individuals should be judged for themselves and not for their species.

Game Mechanics

Githiaskio are weaker than humans, but capable of slightly more extended effort; in ***GURPS*** terms, they have -1 ST [-10] and +2 Fatigue [6]. They are also, of course, fully Aquatic [-40], and breath only water. They use their full normal Move score in water; on land, unless specially equipped, all they can do is drag themselves around slowly and agonizingly with their tentacles, if that, while they suffocate.

Their senses give them a number of Advantages and Disadvantages; to begin with, their poor vision is the equivalent of Bad Sight (nearsightedness, which cannot be corrected, because their brains aren't evolved to handle better vision) [-25] and Color Blindness (actually sensitivity restricted to blue green wavelengths) [-10]. On the other tentacle, they have +2 Acute Taste and Smell [4], the equivalent of Faz Sense [10], Subsonic Hearing [5], and Ultrahearing [5]. They also have the racial Quirks of "React strongly to very bright light" [-1] (they may reflexively draw back and protect their eyes from the source) and "Find chemical taints in the water highly unpleasant" [-1] (they will shy away, fidget, and complain at length a very slight taint of some fairly common pollutants is as unpleasant to them as a stink bomb to a human).

Note; by the rules, the Githiaskio's nearsightedness should give them a combat penalty, while their Faz Sense would only aid them once they had made a roll to sense their target with it. However, the Githiaskio are very adept at using these senses in conjunction; for simplicity, as a special effect, the GM can assume that a Githiaskio can use all combat abilities normally against a submerged foe, at least at fairly close quarters, so long as both its vision and Faz Sense are not actually blocked or incapacitated.

Also, Githiaskio tentacles represent the equivalent of four Extra Arms [40], all with Extra Flexibility [10]. Githiaskio can use all tentacles equally effectively, and so are treated as having Ambidexterity [10]. However, the ends of their tentacles are nothing like as strong as a human wrist, and simply taper to a point, so they lack the subtle flexibility of fingers; Githiaskio invariably have to use two or more tentacles for many tasks, including handling any weapon larger than a knife firearms require at least three, and often four. Also, Githiaskio "fist" attacks are at -2 to hit and -1 damage. This is treated as a special Disadvantage [-15].

Lastly, as swimming and diving creatures, Githiaskio are well suited to zero gravity operations, and have a keen sense for three dimensional action; this gives them a racial bonus of +2 to Free Fall skill [2]. (Some also make exceptional space combat tacticians.) However, a few humans find their non human appearance and speech unnerving, have heard Githiaskio complaining about their Minor Race status at too much length, or have encountered the Githiaskio agencies and factions dedicated to acquiring resources for their race by any legal means; this is treated as a -2 Racial Reputation, with a frequency of 7 or less [-3].

Thus, playing a Githiaskio is a -13 point Disadvantage. Most advantages and disadvantages that are applicable to normal human characters are also appropriate for Githiaskio; in particular, there is no routine psychological condition known to Vilani or Solomani that has not also been identified in this species. The only variations emerge from physiological or environmental differences and these are less significant than scientists expected or are matters of emphasis. (For example, few Githiaskio display a pathological fear of heights, but some have a phobia about the dangers of sudden pressure changes.)

Githiaskio consider that other members of their species may be more or less attractive; the criteria are a mixture of subtle body shape, skin markings, and vocal tone and inflection. Thus, high or low Appearance may be applicable, although it may not be worth considering if the being will not be interacting with other Githiaskio much. Few humans can tell the difference between Githiaskio comeliness and the converse, although it is fairly easy to tell members of the species apart with a little practice. Githiaskio naturally say much the same about humans.

This racial package can be combined with almost any of the templates in ***GURPS Traveller*** , given a little sensible flexibility; for example, Githiaskio with melee weapons skill will usually have learned either Knife or Spear, while Brawling and other unarmed combat skills should be replaced by Wrestling. (Githiaskio Martial Arts consist of a huge range of grappling techniques, with subtleties incomprehensible to anyone without tentacles.) Githiaski itself, and most Githiaskio colonies, are currently at TL 10, with intensive research being performed at TL 11 and various agencies importing TL 12 devices for study, but there are some low tech backwoods Githiaskio communities, while Githiaskio who serve in Imperial forces often acquire TL 12 skills.

On which topic interstellar organizations have many uses for aquatic beings, but obviously have to make special arrangements; the army and marines mostly form "submarine specialist" units, which are attached at corps or army level as needed. The scouts and merchants tend to assign Githiaskio to special exploratory ships, or to base duty on water worlds. (The armed forces of Githiaski are organized on the model of the Imperial army, with modifications as required by the combination of nautical and cavalry functions.)

The Githiaskio have adopted the Imperial attitude toward psionics, so little is known of their innate abilities in such matters. Since their minds are so similar to human in other respects, it is possible they have a comparable level of psionic potential.

Equipment: Githiaskio work best with tools and weapons specially constructed for use with tentacles, but can employ human devices quite effectively. (Generally, no or minimal penalties are imposed for such use, but no bonuses for high dexterity should be allowed either.) Special construction adds little to costs, but such work becomes harder to find the farther away from Githiaski you are. Lower tech items tend to cost slightly more to make waterproof; as an obvious example, gunpowder simply does not work when damp (although more sophisticated explosives do), while a solid state laser simply needs to have its electrical circuits properly sealed. (But neither weapon type is much use in murky water . . .)

Vehicles (spaceships, ATVS, etc.) can be fitted with waterproof equipment, purifiers, and so on, at an additional cost of about Cr200 per crew position or space unit (in the ***GURPS Traveller*** modular starship design system) converted. (Use common sense for this; bulk carrier cargo space requires little conversion, whereas low tech engineering systems demand careful attention.) Living spaces that can convert easily between water and air occupancy are rare and expensive; purification and filtration systems have to be doubled up. Vehicles must, of course, have sealed hulls if they are to be used by Githiaskio out of water. One of the worst problems with water is that it is *heavy* ; it adds 66.7 lbs. per cubic foot of empty interior space to the weight of vehicles (16.7 tons per space unit for spaceships). Only shipyards on worlds with substantial aquatic race communities usually have established facilities for this sort of construction; the yards on Githiaski pride themselves on being the best.

Special personal armor (other than battle dress) and vacc suits can also be produced for Githiaskio; however, any sealed garment should be fitted with special sensor/display packages that convert scans of the vicinity (usually based on short range radar imaging) into something that Githiaskio vibration senses can interpret. (If this is absent, a Githiaskio will feel nearly blind, and probably *extremely* nervous.) Githiaskio Vacc Suit and Battlesuit skills include training in use of these sensors; sense rolls made with them can never exceed the better of these two skills. Such

sensors can be useful, of course, but they are also vulnerable to damage, and active radar can be detected by properly equipped enemies.

Specially made Githiaskio protective suits cost 50% over normal cost for the non standard and rather complex design, plus the cost of the special sensor package, if required. These packages are available at TL 8, when they weigh 8 lbs., cost Cr4,000, and give 3 to sense rolls; remove that penalty at TL 9, and halve weight and reduce cost by Cr500 for each increase in TL. The radar is normally tuned to scan no more than fifty or a hundred yards or so, to prevent sensory overload, and is generally restricted to reflect the capabilities of the Githiaskio's innate senses in water; a skilled operator, with Vacc Suit and Electronics Operations skills, can retune it for greater range, at the cost of potential disorientation.

The real problem, however, is that simple sealed suits do not provide enough support for Githiaskio to operate out of liquid under gravity. A few powered "support suits" have been produced, but these are uncomfortable to the wearer and very expensive (about Cr280,000 each); the cost of adapting such designs to battle dress hardly bears thinking about.

A cheaper approach involves the use of small, sealed motorized vehicles equipped with external mechanical manipulators and sensor packages, and capable of operating on land, in a vacuum, or underwater to a depth of about 2,000 meters. One passenger vehicles of this type cost about Cr30,000, two passenger vehicles Cr50,000. (GMs or players with ***GURPS Vehicles*** are welcome to come up with specific designs.)

Playing Githiaskio: Given that their mental processes are so similar to humans, players and GMs should have no great trouble depicting the personalities of Githiaski characters. However, the practical problems of playing such beings are a little more complex.

A mixed group of air breathing and aquatic PCs is going to find many of the PCs spending a proportion of their time with nothing to do, even if they can afford the array of life support equipment and special gear required for Githiaskio to be comfortable on land (and for humans to work freely underwater). An all aquatic group might be an interesting change of pace, but would add a lot of work for the GM without automatically being that much more rewarding. Githiaskio are mostly best used as interesting and useful NPCs comprehensible as aliens go, but with their own agendas and objectives, and a powerful advantage in their home environment. Their very *similarity* to humans can be used to throw complacent players off guard; after a few encounters with honest, working Githiaskio, and maybe an efficient but polite water world customs officer, PCs may become careless when the next Githiaskio they encounter turns out to be a formidable organized crime boss.

GMs' Notes

Aside from using individual Githiaskio characters in scenarios, a major plot strand arising with this race is the mystery of why they were never contacted by the First Imperium, despite the fact that they lived within its borders. Of course, the stagnant cultural conservatism of late Vilani culture explains a lot, and the Githiaskio never produced a technological civilization to draw attention to itself, but even so . . .

At the GM's option, a group of PCs might be drawn into an investigation of this minor puzzle, only to discover what appears to be a determined Imperial government effort to cover the facts up and discourage investigation. The precise reason is up to you, but it's not impossible that Githiaski was occasionally visited by human ships, and that the Githiaskio encountered human spacefarers only to be treated as animals. A few ancient reference works showing, say, Githiaskio being treated as laboratory specimens, and even vivisected, could sour the relationship between Humaniti and this valued race of citizens.

(Note: Much of this article originally appeared, in an earlier form, in issue 16 of ***The Journal of the Travellers' Aid Society*** *, in 1983.)*

by Jonathan Dale

GURPS Voodoo introduced the ritual magic system, an alternative to *GURPS Magic* for settings where magic works in subtle ways. Gamemasters of settings where magic is rare, mysterious, or commonly regarded as myth may prefer such a system, but the small number of paths provided limits ritual mages. To help expand the possibilities, here are three new paths of ritual magic for influencing people and machines.

Path Of Emotion

These rituals imbue their subject with an emotion or otherwise act on feelings. In-Betweeners have +3 Will versus all of these rituals.

Charisma *Defaults to Path Of Emotion-2*

The subject's charisma is increased for the duration. Each person who comes into contact with the subject must make a resistance roll. If they fail, the amount they lost by is added to any reaction roll towards the subject or any social skill used by the subject.

Fear *Defaults to Path Of Emotion-2*

This ritual can be cast on a person or on an object. If cast on an object, it acts on each person encountering the object for the duration, but the ritual is cast as if there was no symbolic representation (-6). If the subject fails a resistance roll, he must make a Fright Check at -1 for each point by which he lost the resistance roll and will flee the area or avoid the object.

I find this disturbing. What's on my shirt?

Love *Defaults to Path Of Emotion-4*

The archetypical charm, this ritual is cast for one person (possibly the caster) on another subject. If the subject fails a resistance roll, he or she falls in love with the beneficiary of the ritual. The ritual may take effect immediately or may manifest gradually over several days (especially if cast with a long duration). As with many rituals of the mind, the subject may rationalize their behavior and continue even after the ritual effects have ended.

Curiosity *Defaults to Path Of Emotion-2*

This ritual draws the attention of onlookers to an object, causing any who see it to wish to investigate or examine the object in great detail. Investigating is of higher priority than anything except survival, and only short delays can be tolerated by those affected.

Forgiveness *Defaults to Path Of Emotion-3*

It is, of course, easier to gain forgiveness than permission, and that is the purpose of this ritual. The subject forgives the caster (or other beneficiary of the ritual) of one thing. Minor wrongs (such as an insult or minor discourtesy) are permanently forgiven; greater wrongs give bonuses on the resistance roll and the subject may reconsider after the ritual effects have ended (if the caster killed the subject's parents, for example, the subject might resist at +10 and the effect might only last a few days or even hours even if he fails the resistance roll). Such penalties may be reduced if the caster can provide a believable explanation for his conduct.

Bravery *Defaults to Path Of Emotion-2*

The subject's Will is strengthened for purposes of Fright Checks. The subject receives a bonus equal to the amount the ritual succeeded by. This bonus is divided by four for Mythos Fright Checks, with a maximum bonus of +4.

Path Of Domination

Path Of Domination rituals are used to control and manipulate the subject's mind. Some of these rituals are especially useful if cast very quickly. As with any ritual, they can be cast in 1d seconds at a -5 penalty; higher level initiates may be able to eliminate the penalty.

Insignificance/Invisibility *Defaults to Path Of Domination-6*

The subject seems unimportant and inconsequential to those he encounters unless they make a resistance roll. They will take no action in response to his presence and will forget him after he leaves. They may receive additional resistance rolls if someone calls their attention to the subject or if the subject acts violently, and will automatically resist if attacked by the subject.

Ever feel like nobody notices?

Honesty *Defaults to Path Of Domination-4*

The subject may not lie to the caster for one hour or the duration of a single conversation, whichever is longer. If the subject tries to lie, he will inadvertently speak the truth (for example, a murderer who tries to protest innocence will find himself confessing the crime). This ritual will not force the subject to speak, nor will it prevent deception by omission.

Enthrall *Defaults to Path Of Domination-3*

The subject of this ritual is completely entranced by the caster, who must speak to him to maintain this attention. While entranced, the subject may not take any action. If attacked, the subject is automatically surprised, but the ritual is broken.

Inattentiveness *Defaults to Path Of Domination-1*

The subject is distracted by minor, inconsequential things and is unlikely to notice anything of importance. The subject's alertness is reduced by the amount they failed their resistance roll by.

Faithful Servant *Defaults to Path Of Domination-8*

This ritual binds a subject to the caster as his faithful, obedient servant. The subject will follow any directions unless doing so will clearly endanger him, in which case he may make another resistance roll to question and refuse that particular order. This ritual can be repeated at +2 while in effect or at +1 after it has expired.

Forgetfulness ***Defaults to Path Of Domination-4***

The subject forgets a period of time in the recent past. There is an additional penalty based on the length of time to be forgotten: no penalty for less than one minute, -1 up to 2 minutes, -2 for 4 minutes, -3 for 8 minutes, -4 for 15 minutes, -5 for 30 minutes, -6 for up to one hour, and an additional -1 for each doubling of duration. The period of time can be forgotten permanently, until some additional time passes, or until some preset key reminds the subject. The forgetfulness should be considered a curse for purposes of the Soul Cleansing ritual.

Path Of Technology

Through these rituals, the magician can strengthen or weaken machines and other technological devices. For purposes of this path, machine refers to any technological device, including computers. This is the path of the net shaman.

Gremlin/Glitch ***Defaults to Path Of Technology-4***

A subject machine or technological device breaks down. The fault makes the machine temporarily useless but it will be easy to repair. The nature of the fault may be determined by the GM.

Comprehension ***Defaults to Path Of Technology-2***

After this ritual, the caster or other subject adds the amount the ritual succeeded by to any one skill roll intended to understand the purpose of a machine.

Enhancement ***Defaults to Path Of Technology-3***

Some one aspect of a subject machine's performance is improved by 10% for each point the ritual succeeds by. The improved aspect can be increased indefinitely or decreased by as much as 90% of the initial value. For example, a net shaman with a Cyberdeck with a phase length of 2000 makes his Enhancement roll by 9. The new phase length is 200, 90% less than 2000. Computer complexity and the number of rom slots may not be increased, but phase length and memory storage can be improved. Some other examples of uses of this ritual include increasing the range of communicators, scanners, or weapons, increasing the speed of vehicles, or increasing the accuracy rating of a weapon. Weapon damage can not be enhanced. To increase fuel efficiency, use the Power ritual below, instead.

Power ***Defaults to Path Of Technology-3***

The power consumption of a machine is decreased. The available power or fuel will last 20% longer for each point by which this ritual succeeds. This ritual will work on any machine which uses fuel or electricity, including energy weapons and flamethrowers, but not any projectile weapons.

Machine Invisibility ***Defaults to Path Of Technology-8***

No mechanical or electronic sensor will register the subject. He can walk over pressure sensors, through infrared

sensors, and stand in front of video cameras. The device may simply fail to register (as in the case of pressure sensors) or it may develop some type of technical problem while the subject is present (a video camera may suddenly blank out, or the picture could be so distorted by static that nothing is visible on the screen). Sentient computers receive a resistance roll.

Bug/Crash *Defaults to Path Of Technology-4*

This ritual causes a computer program to cease functioning. The ritual will not inherently do any damage to the system, although the failure of the program to operate may lead to damage occurring (for example, failure of an autopilot program may cause a vehicle collision). In some cases, other programs present may be monitoring the affected program, and if this is the case they will respond to its failure in a normal way, possibly restarting it.

Password *Defaults to Path Of Technology-5*

Through this ritual, the caster convinces a computer program that he has passed any one identification test. This test can be a password, a retinascan, a fingerprint, or even a genetic test. The caster must provide some type of input to the testing device (typing something to serve as a password, looking into a retina scanner, etc) but the program will erroneously treat the input as valid.

By Peter Schweighofer

This monster mystery scenario can form the basis of an *X-Files* style game, or can be used as a diverting sideline for a ***Conspiracy X***, ***Cthulhu Now*** or ***GURPS Horror*** or ***Illuminati*** campaign with few alterations. To get the agents started, hand them a copy of the article about a mysterious death and an old swamp creature legend.

Young Man Mauled, Foul Play Suspected

RICHDALE, CT - A gruesome and unexplained murder has stunned this small, suburban town and the many urban tourists visiting to appreciate the fall foliage.

The victim, an unidentified young male, was discovered yesterday morning along state Route 28, known to many residents as Great Swamp Road. A passing driver noted a form slumped at the edge of the road, built on a raised levee cutting through the Great Swamp.

"A motorist noticed the body and called us immediately," said Police Public Relations Liaison Captain Mitchell Strout. "We examined the scene and recovered the body. The state medical inspector is on his way to perform an autopsy on the remains and attempt to establish the victim's identity." From indications found at the scene, police believe the man was walking along Great Swamp Road late at night when he was apparently attacked.

Captain Strout would not elaborate on the cause of death or the state of the body. "We'll be making a statement later this week once we've identified the victim and followed up on a few leads," he said.

Similar unexplained deaths have occurred along Great Swamp Road years ago, in 1958, 1923, and 1889. The victims' bodies were severely mauled and unidentifiable. Local legend claims that a swamp beast lives in the vast marshes and pools south of Richdale. Accounts of mysterious disappearances and deaths in and around the Great Swamp can be found as far back as the Revolutionary War.

"We're not jumping to any conclusions here," Captain Strout said. "I doubt there's any mysterious swamp creature involved. The only things living in there are members of our natural wildlife. No, this man was killed intentionally and gruesomely by someone else, not something else."

Richdale Police Department

One of the agents' contacts has passed along the above clipping from a Connecticut newspaper, thinking it might be pertinent to their current investigation or their hobby of checking into strange occurrences. Perhaps one of the characters knows someone in Richdale, or the town is on their way to another city where they have official business. Certainly the unexplained past occurrences of this kind of crime in the same general locale pique their

interest.

The investigators drive through Richdale in the morning. The surrounding area is filled with residential subdivisions - lovely one-family homes built on two or three acres, with nicely manicured yards and pricey cars in the driveways. The town center has a typical New England Main Street, with quaint little shops, trees lining the sidewalks, and picturesque lamp posts. The road eventually veers south, toward the Great Swamp.

The police station is located in the town hall basement. Captain Strout is more than willing to talk with the characters, as long as they have some kind of official credentials: government agency badge, a press card, or identification from an institution. Captain Strout is more than happy to cooperate.

"A motorist found the body at 7:55 a.m. It was lying on the side of Great Swamp Road, as if it were trying to climb up out of the marsh and onto the street. Police and emergency crews responded when the incident was called in. We examined the scene, then carted the body off to Doc Morton's; he runs the funeral parlor up the street.

"Didn't find much at the site: shreds of the victim's clothes, mostly. No tracks, animal or human. You want to see the body?"

Captain Strout introduces the agents to Doctor Morton, who runs the town morgue from the basement of his funeral home. "State medical examiner was here yesterday," he says. "Called in the ID this morning. Bobby Ryan, age 22, from Walton, the next town west of here."

"His folks say he was at a party in town," Strout adds. "Must have tried walking home, or hitching a ride. Route 28 is the main road from Richdale to Walton."

Doctor Morton pulls the body from the freezer. It's mutilated beyond recognition. "Mostly tear wounds, possibly something resembling claws or teeth. Could have been done with an especially nasty garden tool." Anyone making a cursory medical assessment concurs with the doctor's comments. Agents taking a closer look notice severe and unnatural discoloration in the wounds and on the skin. "The body was in the water for a few hours," Doctor Morton says. "Plenty of microorganisms in there, you know."

Blood and tissue samples have been sent off to the state police labs, but results aren't expected for at least a week.

Both Doctor Morton and Captain Strout deflect any comments or questions regarding the Great Swamp Monster, or the past occurrences of mysterious maulings. "We've already questioned the motorist who found the body, some business owners at the intersection of Routes 28 and 118, a few nearby residents, and old hermit Hancock. The guy's a little paranoid, but he's no murderer. We'll have the boys from the state down here to take a look, too. We have no more leads right now."

If the investigators insist, Captain Strout takes them down to the site where the body was found. Observant characters note a few marks where the victim tried to climb up the levee to the road. Although there's blood along his trail up from the murky water, there isn't enough to suggest the attack took place here. A few scraps of clothing can be seen stuck on bushes a ways into the swamp, but Captain Strout advises against venturing into the marshes. "Lots of deep

pools, probably quicksand, marsh gas," he says. "We've scanned what we could with binoculars and from the air. Nothing." He encourages the characters to do their own interviews, starting with some of the businesses and sites along the swamp's edge. Should the agents head into the swamp, jump ahead to "Into the Great Swamp" below.

Richdale Library

A visit to the town library or newspaper offices can reveal some information about the Great Swamp. Comprehensive library work might turn up some of the clues below:

- The swamp is fed by several underground springs and a few streams running down nearby ridges. It drains into the Shepaug River near Walton.
- In the late 1600s, when the town was first settled, a levee was constructed where Great Swamp Road is today. The lake it was to have formed would have been used as a mill pond, while the area to the south was to be farmland. The levee was ineffective, and the swamp grew on both sides.
- The swamp was shunned by locals. Game was never plentiful there, and the land was useless for practical purposes.
- Disappearances began in the early 1700s. Occasionally a body was discovered later, badly mutilated. Rumors began of a malevolent creature confined to the swamp.
- After an unexplained death in 1923, frustrated residents formed a posse that entered the swamp with boats. They combed the fens from one end to the other, searching for a monster, but found nothing in seven days of searching.
- In the 1930s the town began dumping its trash into the swamp along Route 118, in an attempt to fill the marshes and force anything living there to flee. The dumping continued until 1977, when the Environmental Protection Agency cited the town and forced it to privatize its trash removal services.

The agents must visit other locations around the marshes to gather rumors and ask questions regarding the latest mysterious death if they're to come to their own conclusions about the Great Swamp Monster.

Town Garage

This large prefab building and the parking lot surrounding it is packed with municipal vehicles: school buses, dump trucks, and other road service vehicles. Those inside the building are undergoing routine maintenance or heavy repairs. Mountains of sand and salt have been piled nearby in preparation for road maintenance during the coming winter. Oil and other fluids dripping from the vehicles slowly trickles down the pavement, into drain pipes under the road, and out into the Great Swamp.

The garage supervisor, Chuck O'Leary, has an office in a small annex to the main structure. He's a short, burly man whose cigar wags from his lips when he speaks. He never knew Bobby Ryan, the victim, and hasn't had any mysterious experiences with the swamp. "Most folks stay away from there," he says, puffing away at the cigar. "Summers you get some eerie lights, will-o'-the-wisps they say; probably just methane gas bubbling up from the marsh floor. But I've never seen anything menacing or spooky out there. Most of the drivers and mechanics agree, too, even the ones who've worked on repairing Route 28."

If asked about pollutants from the vehicles and road salts, O'Leary gets defensive. "That's nothing, compared to what the businesses over on Route 118 dump in there every year," he says. "Don't forget all that junk in the old town dump filtering into the ecosystem, plus runoff from the sewage treatment plant. What drains in from the town garage is nothing. And it certainly didn't kill that boy."

Sewage Plant

The town's wastewater treatment facility consists of two low buildings, six filtration pools, and many exterior pipes and

valves. Effluent is sprayed and stirred into the pools, each giving off a differing degree of septic odor. Pipes from the last and least-offensive-smelling pool slowly drain treated wastewater into a small open pond. Overflow eventually trickles into the Great Swamp. Anyone with some knowledge of municipal works realizes that this is all standard waste treatment practice.

While the agents are investigating the plant's outer workings, a man emerges from one of the buildings to greet them. He introduces himself as Larry Oswald, the Waste Management Plant Administrator. Oswald dresses in practical coveralls smudged with grease and other smears. "Captain Strout told me to expect you people," he says, extending his hand. "Come on in, I'll show you the works. Can I get you some coffee?"

The pipes inside the buildings are even more numerous and twisting than those outside. Oswald shows the characters around, pointing out filtration tanks, effluent intake pipes, and bacterial injection systems. "Sure, we use filters and stuff, but we also use biology to clean the water. Bacteria thrives on pollutants, so we introduce certain strains into the water to clean it out, then neutralize it before it leaves here."

"Would I drink what comes out of the last pipe?" Oswald asks himself while sipping his coffee. "Certainly not. I wouldn't even give it to my dog. But the swamp does the rest. You see, a marsh is a giant environmental filter. By the time this water reaches the Shepaug River, it's good enough to drink. I have the EPA reports to prove it, if you want to check it out for yourself." The reports themselves are tedious to read, but an investigator with some biology experience can determine the pollutant levels in the water going out of the swamp are minimal, and certainly not harmful to the human physiology. Even the water flowing from the plant could be potable, at least to a dog.

Careful analysis of the EPA report (if the agents request a copy to take with them) might reveal some discrepancies. Some harmless trace elements normally present in treated water are surprisingly low. A few results could not even be logically derived from the base numbers supposedly used in the calculations. If questioned about this later, Oswald denies any involvement in changing the numbers. "Look, I just take the readings at this end," he pleads. "The EPA guys, they do the work at the other end. You have questions about the report, talk to them."

Old Town Dump

An immense mountain rises up from the swamp's edge where the town used to dump its refuse. Little trash is visible now. The mound is covered with a thin layer of soil, from which sprouts clumps of grass, a few thorny bushes, and a sickly looking tree or two. Nobody smells the rotting odor of garbage one would expect from an active dump. Only a few appliances peeking above the feeble layer of dirt betray the former trash heap's true identity.

Walking around the massive dump takes some care. The ground is broken and uneven. Thorny thickets climb out of the swamp and up the mound on the west edge. A careless step might send a character's leg into a deep, watery hole, or force them to lose their balance on dangerous ground; the garbage isn't buried too far beneath the surface. Observant investigators notice a few rivulets oozing from the mountain's western perimeter. The sludge is probably caused by rainwater draining through the trash heap.

Climbing the mound isn't a good idea. The footing is very shaky. A character's weight is enough to crush old garbage, sucking his leg into a foul-smelling cavity. Broken glass and rusted metal lurks beneath the surface, waiting for unwary agents.

During their examination, the investigators get the unsavory feeling they're being watched. Who knows what the

swamp's twisted trees and clumps of earth and grass hide? Their fears are allayed when their wanderings startle a stray cat, who leaps past them from the trash heap and runs off toward Route 118.

Residential Subdivision

This neighborhood was built about 10 years ago on a low ridge overlooking the Great Swamp. The one-family homes are situated on two-acre lots, with plenty of wooded area separating each property. Those fronting the swamp have views of the marshes, though only for a few hundred feet.

Most folks here have no problems answering questions if the investigators furnish proper official identification. The residents have at one time heard of the Great Swamp beast, but nobody believes it. Sometimes at night they hear the cries of wildlife in the marshes, but nothing's ever emerged to attack them, and nobody's noticed anything unusual. If pressed, a few residents living near the swamp admit they've seen an occasional stray dog roaming through the fens, a poor cur that was easily scared off.

Shopping Center

The shopping center along Route 118 is characteristic of most of the businesses along this road. The plaza has a huge parking lot, and includes a grocery store, department store, and numerous national chain stores. The other establishments along Route 118 include fast food joints, car dealerships, and gas stations, so much that any resident questioned refers to this area as "Gasoline Alley." The heavy traffic and many paved parking lots create a drainage system for water and pollutants from the numerous vehicles here... all draining into the Great Swamp.

Folks working in this area have no idea there's anything sinister lurking in the Great Swamp. Most laugh at stories of hideous creatures living there. They're more worried that some deranged madman killed Bobby Ryan, and even then their concern is minimal.

Industrial GeneWorks R&D Headquarters

The town's main employer and primary taxpayer is Industrial GeneWorks, a corporation with research and development headquarters built on a low ridge overlooking the northern marshes. Even if the agents are planning on using their official clout to get in, an advance call for an appointment might help.

The facility is just up a road not far from the town garage. The driveway is marked by a sternly optimistic sign: "Industrial GeneWorks: Building A Better Bio-Genetic Future." Just up the drive, a guard house and gate restricts entry, and justly so. A troupe of protesters is parading in front of the entrance. They're waving signs saying "Free the Animals" and "Stop Animal Torture." The animal rights protesters allow the investigators' car to pass, though they look angrily through the windows and brandish their signs menacingly. After examining the characters' credentials and calling ahead to the main facility, the gate guard allows them to pass.

They're met at the facility's main entrance by a dapper and overly friendly man in a three-piece suit: Barry Mannheimer, Public Relations Officer. He ushers them through the lobby and into his office. Mannheimer explains his corporation's vision. "Industrial GeneWorks is one of many research facilities working on the human genome project. We're also engaged in genetic work to eliminate certain diseases and birth defects. Unfortunately, our war against illnesses inflicts casualties; we must use animal subjects to test our scientists' theories. You no doubt noticed the protesters at our front gate. They've become a permanent fixture this past year, though they're mostly harmless, a nuisance, really."

Mannheimer offers to take the agents on a tour of the company's laboratories. They must don lab coats and protective face and hair masks, "To protect the integrity of our experiments," Mannheimer insists. They're led through the

building's several levels, past labs, libraries, a lecture hall, and an entire floor for the maintenance and monitoring of animal test subjects: mostly dogs and monkeys, but also rabbits, cats, mice, and a few chimpanzees.

If asked, Mannheimer notes that the animals are destroyed humanely when their use is finished, and disposed through a medical waste contractor. On their tour, perceptive investigators notice the bright red trash receptacles marked for medical waste only. Mannheimer shows them a copy of their waste agreement if they insist: the disposal costs Industrial GeneWorks $250,000 a year for this facility alone, a price Mannheimer admits has been escalating in recent years.

Although initially reluctant, their guide agrees to give the agents a tour of the grounds, with armed supervision for security reasons. The site is heavily wooded, though there are no signs of creatures passing this way. The area facing the swamp is rocky and descends sharply. Those characters specifically looking for pipes or waste emptying into the marsh don't find it. "We're very careful about that," Mannheimer says. "We have a preliminary waste treatment unit in the basement, so our effluent is somewhat cleaner when it reaches the sewage plant down the road. And if something were leaking, the quarterly EPA reports on the Great Swamp's tributaries into the Shepaug River would show it."

Mannheimer is somewhat less cooperative if the investigators want to snoop around the facility unchaperoned. He insists that Industrial GeneWorks hasn't done anything wrong - if it has, he suggests the characters return with a search warrant, in which case he'd be happy to cooperate.

Hermit Hancock

The recluse known as Hermit Hancock lives just off Route 28. The trees near the dirt road entrance are covered with "No Trespassing" notices and a few hand-made signs discouraging visitors from venturing farther. The road soon leaves the stand of trees and leads into the swamp.

The Hancock residence consists of a run-down trailer propped up on concrete blocks. Several pick-up trucks are parked around the trailer, only one of which might work. The other vehicles are wrecked, picked apart, and sinking into soft earth. Other piles of junk litter the grounds.

As soon as the investigators approach, Hermit Hancock emerges from the trailer brandishing a woodcutter's ax. He's in his mid fifties, with a half-grown mangy beard covering his face and a mop of gray, tousled hair atop his head. His denim overalls are smeared with all manner of dirt, and it smells like he hasn't bathed recently.

"What're you doing out here?" he demands, pointing his ax at the characters. "Can't you folks read? No trespassing. That means no troublesome teenagers, no police, no visitors, and no people in fancy suits. And it means you. Now what do you want?"

Hancock listens only briefly to anything the agents might say. He moves threateningly if they make any attempt to enter his trailer. "You want inside, you have to get past me. And you'd better have a warrant, too," he says. Hancock believes in the Great Swamp beast, though he doesn't know why it leaves him alone. "Some nights I can hear him out there in the bogs, ripping apart trees, splashing through pools, and howling like the devil himself." Hancock tries to be as unfriendly as possible to encourage the investigators to go away. Perceptive agents might notice certain physical manifestations of his various chemical dependencies: the shakes, slurred speech, and nervous ticks.

For anyone approaching Hancock's property from the swamp, he's set up a few surprises. He's dug up the marsh bottom in a few places, creating unnaturally deep pits for investigators to fall into while traversing the watery path... as if they've just been pulled under by some swamp creature. Hancock's even prepared a few tricks to surprise agents making their way among the grassy mounds that rise out of the murky water. He has "transplanted" several mounds to low rafts anchored to the bottom. When a character steps on one of these mounds, it moves away, then starts rising out of the water from the agent's weight on one end. To the unsuspecting, they might believe the mound was the back of the submerged Great Swamp beast.

Anyone snooping around the grounds of Hermit Hancock's trailer is discovered and warned off. Perceptive agents wading through the swamp just past his property might notice a well-trodden path through the marsh to the northeast... leading toward the Industrial GeneWorks facility. If they follow it, the investigators need all their tracking skills, for the trail winds along some soggy terrain and across a few shallow pools. It fades out near the solid ground by the Industrial GeneWorks labs.

The hermit angrily denies having anything to do with the company. "I don't trust anyone," Hancock says. "Especially those corporate suits up there at GeneWorks. More trouble than anyone else around here." (Should the investigators question Mannheimer about Hancock, he says Industrial GeneWorks has never had any problem with the old hermit, and he's never even met the man himself.)

The real story is very different. Mannheimer hired Hancock to discreetly dispose of animal remains now and then, to lessen the burden on Industrial GeneWorks' disposal contract restrictions. Hancock makes weekly nighttime forays to the facility, then drags the corpses deep into the swamp, weights them down and sinks them. For his trouble, Hancock gets a hefty wad of cash, which he uses to fund his various self-destructive habits. The Great Swamp beast that killed Bobby Ryan was a particularly large dog which wasn't quite dead when Hancock sank him. Disoriented and mutated by genetic experiments and chemical testing, the canine roams the swamp in search of food and cool, safe places for its frequent rest periods.

Into the Great Swamp

Venturing into the swamp is best done during daylight hours. The uneven land is best traveled on foot, using heavy-duty waders that can be purchased from a hunting and fishing store along Route 118. Small boats have trouble negotiating the pools and shallow streams - investigators in boats spend more time pushing the boats off tight spots and underwater logs than conducting a successful search.

The characters may take water and soil samples if they want, but won't be able to have them analyzed until much later.

During the day, the agents don't encounter any swamp beast; however, there are plenty of eerie indications and spooky discoveries that help make for a suspenseful search:

- While wading into the marshes, characters have a disturbing feeling they can't explain. A moment's observation reveals that they hear and see no birds, animals or reptiles. Clouds of insects often appear to pester the agents.
- Should they wander close to the old town dump or Route 118, the investigators find isolated pools of oily pollutants.
- While carefully making their way across a shallow pool, a character steps on something soft beneath the surface, causing bubbles to appear nearby. It could be some foul creature hiding in the pool... or more likely it's swamp gas created by decomposing organic material. The gas has an odd odor, and is flammable should anyone be brandishing an open flame.
- Another agent missteps on a submerged log which rolls deeper into the water. Was it the monster? The character must somehow maintain her balance or fall into the murky pool.
- The investigators come upon a pool over which hangs a particularly foul odor. They could search the water carefully, or you could use the log trick above to cause one agent to fall in and make a grisly discovery. Someone has sunk several animal bodies here. They're beneath a fishing net weighted with bricks. Anyone with medical experience who's willing to examine the bodies can tell they were used in research . . . and probably from Industrial GeneWorks.

The Swamp Beast Strikes

The deranged and mutated dog roaming the swamp takes a second victim at dusk, while the investigators are nearby. Perhaps they're searching the marshes late in the day, climbing the old town dump, driving along Route 28, or re-examining the site where the first body was found. From across the swamp drifts a blood-curdling scream of terror. It

comes from the direction of Hermit Hancock's place.

When the agents arrive, night has fallen. The lights are on in Hancock's trailer, and the door has been torn open by something with claws and large canines. The inside has been ransacked, though nobody's sure if this was the trailer's original state or a result of a scuffle. Quick investigation shows traces of swamp water everywhere, and a smell similar to that found near the animal corpses. A closer look reveals clumps of mangy, wet hair caught near the door, and blood. The crimson trail leads out the door, around the back, and into the marsh along a path. Another human scream comes from farther along the trail.

When the investigators catch up with Hancock, they see a gruesome sight. The man is on the ground, bleeding from numerous wounds. Hancock is weeping, babbling on incoherently: "Please, set your brothers free, I will. Stay away. I needed the money. Meant no harm, really...." He desperately flails his ax with one hand to fend off a large beast.

In the dark, the creature lunges at Hancock. Investigators get glimpses of large fangs, red eyes and long claws amidst a blur of mangy, discolored fur. If they distract it, the beast charges them. If not, it finishes Hancock off unless destroyed. A few well-placed shots bring the creature down, though it comes awfully close to taking some pieces out of the characters before it dies.

If Hancock is still alive, he confesses his role helping Mannheimer hide the corpses of test animals from the Industrial GeneWorks facility. Closer inspection of the creature shows it is a large dog, probably once a German shepherd. Weeks of living in the swamp and unknown genetic and chemical experiments have turned it into a monster.

Debriefing

The police arrive soon after the agents resolve the situation. An ambulance arrives to take care of what's left of Hancock. Captain Strout thanks the investigators for their help, but assures them he can take care of it from here.

Should the agents return to Industrial GeneWorks' research and development facility, they find it eerily deserted at first. No sentry watches the gate, no security monitors or locks stand guard. As they proceed from the administrative area into the laboratories, the characters smell smoke. The entire research area has been set ablaze! Although Richdale fire fighters arrive quickly, they're only able to save the administrative annex. A quick inspection reveals that the filing cabinets are empty and the computers removed. Company representatives from GeneWorks' international headquarters deny there was ever a research branch in Richdale.

If the characters send any soil and water samples for testing, the results come back a week later. The water is contaminated with high levels of biochemical agents and everyday pollutants. Checking with the Environmental Protection Agency reveals that the testing agent for the Shepaug River and its tributaries is under suspicion of altering the reports and accepting bribes from someone at Industrial GeneWorks' Richdale facility. The animal corpses can also be traced to the company.

As for the real Great Swamp beast, it's up to you to determine if it really exists, when it chooses to emerge from the marsh, and whether it appears for a future encounter. With all the excitement lately, it probably wants to hibernate in a nice bog until spring arrives...

Adventure Map

by Angela Deacon

A GM (too many systems to name them all) for more than ten years now, I've started a *lot* of campaigns. Like most GMs, I've started a fair number more than I've actually *finished*. Every campaign taught me something different, but there's a fact that stood out: Most of the campaigns that worked, that really really *flew*, were supported by the strength of the very first session. The opening adventure of your campaign provides a foundation that some GMs underestimate the importance of. In this article, I'll share what I've learned about making the opening moves the best they can be.

Order Out of Chaos: Before You Start

Before a campaign begins, you've got a chaotic cloud of possibility that excites everybody - players and GMs alike have visions of exciting scenes, dramatic conflicts, and satisfying resolutions. The images aren't precise at all, just flashes of atmosphere, of *moment* . Once the campaign actually begins, what you end up with is an exercise of shutting down the possibilities bit by bit until an actual story forms. The infinite becomes the finite, and (when it really works) the finite is *more* satisfying than the vague (if exciting) impressions of what *might* have been were.

As we all know, it doesn't always work. Very often, the pre-game excitement is the high point of the campaign. Sometimes, this is a result of vastly differing expectations from the players: Big Dan wants lots of dialogue with weird NPCs, Angry Bob wants plenty of opportunities to be heroic in combat, Quiet Greg wants to play a thief, no matter *what* the game's about, and the GM wants to do a grand epic about the collapse of empires and the rise of new nations. The result? A disappointing mess.

There's no real way to avoid some version of this problem. Some GMs like to have pre-campaign "jam sessions" with the players to talk things through - and that's great - but when it comes down to brass tacks, people want different things from games, and no amount of touchy-feely Alcoholics Anonymous-style dialogues will change that ("Hi, I'm Angry Bob, and if I don't get to kick some tail and look good doing it, I might as well not play. *"Hi, Angry Bob! Group hug!"*).

I advocate an alternate solution: designing an opening-session adventure that's custom-tailored to help the *players* create a unified direction and passion for the story.

The Elements of a Great Opening Session

Pacing. Serious, no-excuses pacing. Gotta have it.

The first monster that must be slain in the opener must be slain by the Game Master, not the players. *The pacing must not be allowed to lag.* I don't mean it has to be non-stop action from the word go; obviously, if you're doing a murder mystery or something atmospheric-and-introspective [waves to the ***Vampire*** players; smirks], then that won't do. But I've seen a number of campaigns killed right from the start by a GM stupid enough to let the PCs begin the campaign by *shopping.* Is that nervous laughter I hear? Most of us have done it. And what you get is two hours of people looking up the price of custom engraving for sword-scabbards and negotiating how much a *special* cyberdeck costs, or arguing about how easy it is to buy an automatic weapon in Utah.

No shopping. No "you all meet in a bar, now describe yourselves and chat for a while." No "you're hanging out at SuperTeam Headquarters and decide to do a round in the Really Hazardous Simulations Room." Bleah. Give em the

story, and give it to them right from the beginning.

In the first session (really, in the first several), the characters are still half-molded lumps of imaginatory clay (is "imaginatory" a word? Let's cope if it isn't). The players have an idea of what their characters are *kind* of like, what they *might* be, but in the same way that no plot survives contact with a good party, no character idea does, either. As the GM, it's your responsibility to put the fire to the clay early and often in the first session: give them a variety of challenges that *tests who they are* , and *involves* them.

There's a good argument for starting just about any campaign with a fight scene or other visceral, physical conflict that the whole group can participate in (waits until the indignant murmur dies down . . .)

I don't mean a shopping spree interrupted by one, either. I mean that the characters *begin the campaign in conflict.* It doesn't even have to be tightly tied to the GM's idea of what the plot will be. A physical conflict as the opening move has the following really genuine perks:

- The players immediately, right from the word go, must be **AWAKE** . This is the principle they don't tell you in the "How to be a GM" chapters. A problem we've all faced is the gang of players, hanging out and noshing junk food, quoting *The Princess Bride* and Monty Python to each other and eventually (sort of, a bit at a time, maybe) gently easing their way into thinking of starting the game. Two hours late and half-assed. With some groups, those two hours of easing-in is unavoidable, but when the game starts, it should snap the players to attention and get them concerned, right away, with what's happening. There's nothing like a fight scene with a bunch of goons (or minor monsters, or muggers, or what-have-you) to pop open the adrenaline faucet and let it gush.
- It gives the players the opportunity to explore teamwork right away, to get an idea of what they can *achieve together* before you get to the amusing dialogues that show how cleverly they can argue. Since this is their first fight as a team (and it doesn't *HAVE* to be a fight - a dangerous car-chase along a mountain road will do just fine), go a little easy on them. Stack the odds in their favor (heavily!) but then don't fudge it. Let them really see what they've got. Very often, they'll be a bit clumsy. Keep them scared and they'll learn quick.
- It gives everybody a quick run through the rules. Sometimes (especially with a new group, or one that hasn't played the system of choice in a while) this will point out vital holes in everybody's understanding of how things work that could bog play down later on. Even if your games are all literary and open-blouse and freeform, it helps the GM be fair (and the players know what to expect) when everybody's brain is warmed up to the game system.

Ride the Wave

Okay. That opening scene was a doozie, and the party are licking their wounds and grabbing for the healing potions (knowing alchemists, the wounds taste better). They're *stoked* , as they should be, and just as you have ridden the pre-campaign excitement into the first taste of collapsed possibilities, you must now right the post-conflict adrenaline into something different.

Be aware of what is going on in the minds of your players at this point. They're thinking things like "Man! I forgot to learn the **Dodge Goon** skill!" and "Yikes! I didn't realize that this spell would hit my teammates as well as my enemies!" or "You know, when I wrote that my character would scream 'Eat my wrath, miscreants!' in the middle of combat, I didn't realize how dorky it would sound!" They're also being happy with the things that went right. That's the fire baking that imaginatory clay we're coping with, giving your players their first taste of what it's like when their Nebulous Concept collides with the Party Reality. Don't let them rest (and we'll get back to their doubts later).

The next scene should introduce moral or ethical dilemmas, serious decision-making with no obvious "one true path" to follow. The reasons for this are related to the reasons for the fight scene: Right away, you want to spot trouble-areas in the party, areas that might cause conflict down the road. And right away, you want to spot those areas where they'll shine, where they can really show off. So, you want a moral or ethical dilemma that will really get the players thinking immediately about where they stand on an issue. Furthermore, the dilemma should have some kind of *immediate* consequences, so they don't just devolve into some kind of lame philosophical debate (which is almost as bad as watching them shop). This also makes the scene dramatic, and it lets the players have a *significant effect* on things,

which gets them involved even more deeply.

Now, I don't know what your Master Plot is, so listing all the possible ways to follow up an action scene with a Deep Thinking Dilemma/Time Bomb won't help anybody (and I'm sure you're up to it if you give it some thought), but that brings us to . . .

Plant the Seeds

We've put the fire under their backsides, and the clay is baking. They are finding out what their characters believe, how they perform together, and what they're capable of under the rules. They are watching the infinite collapse, and watching it collapse into something *interesting.* So far, so good.

Now is the time to plant the seeds from which your entire campaign will grow. The first session should introduce at least one or two NPCs that the party will get to know. The first session should introduce at least the outer layer of the Big Problems they are eventually destined to be challenged by. If there is a Big Villain in the campaign, the players should meet him, now (or one of his Little Villain Cronies Meant to Distract). They don't even have to know he's the Big Villain yet, but they should have a reason to hate him (or care about him, if the Old Switcheroo is your bag). The first session should be a microcosm of the entire Grand Vision the GM has for the future. Now, we all know that the Grand Vision will morph and grow and mature as the game goes on, but a few sessions down the road, you will seriously reap what has been sown in Session One.

There are a lot of reasons for a campaign petering out. We've already combated several of the big ones: By bringing in teamwork and methods and motives and testing them in the fires of Serious Stuff from the beginning, we've already put a stake in the heart of such demons as "The party is pulling in different directions" and "They step on each other's toes when the chips are down" and things like that. Well, maybe we've just slapped those demons in the face, but we've at least *found* them.

But the next big killer of campaigns is the GM running out of *personal* steam, of milking the first few sessions for all they're worth, but then finding that their creative energies have been tapped out with no reserves. That's another reason Session One is so vital - get in the habit of planting seeds for the future early and often. Give your players something to wonder about, and give *yourself* something to build on when you run out of plots. And don't be vague, either - bring up some real issues that will have to be tackled. Give them a story worth biting into.

By the End of the Session . . .

The exact order of things isn't vital, but, by the end of your session, your Virgin Heroes should have experienced the following, and you with them:

- A real challenge to their safety.
- A real questioning of their motives and morals.
- Some "down time" where the PCs get to roleplay their personal relationships, and figure out what they are (without shopping).
- Meetings with interesting people that they have a reason to have an opinion about. Preferably, there should be at least one NPC that they'll really LIKE. Some GMs get off on having nothing but obnoxious NPCs. Get over it. I mean, you need *somebody* to tragically kill later on, right?
- Encounters that demonstrate what the campaign will be about - early steps toward real conclusions down the road. These should engage their interest and tickle their motives (previously explored).
- A variety of tasty snacks. Preferably paid for by the players. I mean, really.

And the whole thing should have been paced in such a way that kept them acting and *concerned about the results* the whole time. Crack that whip. Hya, mule.

Groups Hugs, Revisited

Now is the time for Angry Bob to get his hug. *After* the first game. Remember those doubts they were having back when the clay was being put to the fire? One thing that you really must do when scheduling your Session One is to schedule a post-game rap session to follow it. It doesn't have to be immediately after the game (some of us have schedules to keep and alarm clocks to face, after all) but it should be ASAP. Kill two birds with one stone: Make it a lunch or something. Pick a favorite restaurant. Again, invite the players to pay. You never know.

This is the trick: ***LET THEM CHANGE.*** The first session will have introduced a whole slew of triumphs and goofs. The players, now that they've seen how their creations fare in Actual Adventuring, are going to have some things that they're really happy with - and some things that they wish they'd done differently with their characters. Let them. The time for making them pay for their mistakes is later on, in the game. Right now, let them make little tweaks here and there. They'll probably have plenty of nifty ideas on how their characters will relate and work together, and you want that; don't make them carry their early regrets on their backs for the rest of the game. Make them comfy with the characters they are playing, and their role in the Grand Scheme, and you'll all have a lot more fun seeing that Scheme come to pass.

Or, you know, watching the players tear it to shreds. As a team.

By G.R. Cogman

Art by Fredd Gorham and Dan Smith

Quick Description

In this ***In Nomine*** adventure, two Renegade Servitors of Kobal are on the loose, and attempting to manipulate a Remnant Seraph of Yves and an innocent six-force Mortal into an operatic aria that will literally bring the house down. Meanwhile, three hunters of Asmodeus' pursue the Renegades, and a Mercurian of David who patronizes the Opera House requests that angelic PCs investigate the matter, while Kobal sends out some demonic PCs to foil the minions of the Game and find a little trinket of his . . .

Background

Last month, Ashamael and Lucrezio discovered a neat little Relic trinket in Kobal's private collection: a necklace with the property of converting any Corporeal Songs of Thunder sung in its presence (within earshot of the wearer) to Songs that would have a devastating physical effect on the locality. (It had been liberated from a Servitor of Janus quite a while ago.) Ashamael and Lucrezio decided to borrow it themselves, in order to work out a joke that would use it suitably.

Unfortunately for them, the theft was traced before they had managed to work out The Joke, and they found themselves on the run as Renegades, with a team of Asmodeus' on their tails: they have no wish to join the Hosts of Heaven, but they can hardly go back to Hell without the joke of the century to win them a pardon from their Prince.

By some infernal stroke of luck, such a Joke has fallen into their hands. They discovered (when Lucrezio attempted to manipulate his emotions) that Gavin Julianson was a Remnant, and found him linked to Tania Sherdun, a natural six-Force human in the Opera chorus to whom he was giving singing lessons. Gavin had vague memories of the Symphony, and was attempting to recreate it in Tania's voice.

At this point the two Kobalites looked at each other, realizing that they had found their Joke. What better amusement than to have a Remnant Angel and an innocent human trigger the Relic in the middle of a performance at the Opera, causing a general structural collapse and disaster?

Ashamael found a convenient host: the mild-mannered and friendly John Samuel, who was in charge of the props for performances at the Opera. John Samuel has since become something of an alcoholic and a dirty old man, and is causing worries to those who know him: the Shedim has so far avoided any overly drastic evils. He has also been possessing the odd passer-by outside the Opera, in an attempt not to corrupt John Samuel too fast.

Lucrezio found himself an identity as "Math Collin," one of the lighting crew who works the spotlights and stage lights. He is enjoying the general emotional turmoil of the opera. He has also been handling all communication with Gavin, convincing him that he is an agent of greater powers, and that he can restore Gavin to the glory that is his, through Tania's voice.

Gavin has been convinced that if Tania can sing, on stage, with all her force, the one piece of Celestial music that he

remembers, then he will be returned to his former self. He does not realize the full nature of the Song which he is teaching her. Ashamael and Lucrezio intend to make sure that she is wearing the Necklace at the time.

The hunters of the Game are on the heels of the Kobalites, however. They have managed to trace them to this city, and to the general vicinity of the Opera, and intend to check out the Opera House using their cover identity of Financial Consultant and staff.

Yesterday, this was all blundered into by Terethel, who happened to be in the vicinity when Kushiel passed the Opera House. He recognized him (having once run into him elsewhere) as a Servitor of Asmodeus, and instantly jumped to the incorrect conclusion that he was somehow attempting to sabotage the Opera House. Since his Role is busy in the fund-raising week, he attempts to enlist angelic PCs to stop him, causing them to enter the tangle.

Kobal, elsewhere, has no wish to see Asmodeus gaining an advantage by capturing Renegade Servitors of his, or confiscating the Relic: he will corral some demonic PCs, either direct Servitors of his or people who are prepared to do him a favor, and have them investigate the Opera House (where he knows the hunters of the Game are headed): perhaps to foil the hunters, perhaps to give Ashamael and Lucrezio the chance to play this Joke.

Characters

Tania Sherdun, Singer

Corporeal Forces -- 2 Strength: 3 Agility: 5
Ethereal Forces -- 2 Intelligence: 3 Precision: 5
Celestial Forces -- 2 Will: 3 Perception: 5
Status: 2
Charisma: 2
Songs: Thunder (Corporeal/4)
Skills: Dodge/2, Emote/4, Knowledge (Opera/3), Move Silently/2, Singing/5
Attunements: None

Tania is a hopeful young soprano with a great deal of potential, who has been the beneficiary of coaching from Gavin. While she finds a great deal about him to be disturbing or mysterious, she reconciles herself with the facts that he has not made any advances on her, and that he is a very good teacher. She is puzzled by the current work that he has been training her in, but hopes for an explanation soon.

Tania is a good-hearted young woman, and a prime candidate to be a Soldier of God, if she does not get snared by Hell first. Gavin has trained her to perform the Song of Thunder in response to a signal from him, either verbal or a particular run of notes on his violin. She will respond to this almost automatically by now: as she has always practiced privately with him, she does not realize the effects that it may have on others.

Tania is somewhat shy, though will talk freely about the current opera or about opera in general: she is the understudy for the heroine's part. She will not mention her private lessons with Gavin unless forced into it, or given strong reason. She has no demonic taint on her, as Lucrezio and Ashamael have been carefully avoiding her.

Gavin Julianson, Remnant of Seraph of Yves, First Violinist in the Opera orchestra

Corporeal Forces -- 2 Strength: 3 Agility: 5
Ethereal Forces -- 3 Intelligence: 4 Precision: 8
Celestial Forces -- 0 Will: 0 Perception: 0
Vessel: Human/1 (Status/3), Role/3 (First Violinist in the Opera Orchestra)
Songs: Thunder (Corporeal/5)
Skills: Artistry (Violin/6), Detect Lies/2, Dodge/2, Knowledge (Opera/3,

Violin/5), Languages (French/2, Italian/3, Latin/2)
Attunements: Divine Destiny

Gavin is a Remnant, the victim of a Celestial battle some ten years ago in the city. His body was injured, and he recovered in hospital as an amnesiac. Taking his doctor's last name as a surname, he attempted to make a place for himself in the world, haunted by vague memories of a greater existence, a nobler purpose, and a beautiful music that he can never hear again.

He found a place for himself in several orchestras before settling in the Opera orchestra, using his natural talents with the violin. He has coached several students privately in singing, but Tania is his best student yet, showing true drive and talent. Lucrezio has convinced him that through her music he may regain his former identity: a lie, but one that he desperately wants to believe. He will do anything to make sure that she performs. Unconscious use of his Divine Destiny attunement is what has caused Gavin and Tania to come in contact, as she is a natural six-Force human with the potential to be a Soldier of God.

Gavin is obsessive on the subject of his music: he has a small room in a block of flats not far from the Opera House, but spends almost every waking hour at work, either rehearsing, practicing, performing, or coaching Tania privately in the evenings. He has become even less communicative after being deceived by Lucrezio. Musical technique is the only thing that he will discuss willingly.

Lucrezio, Habbalim of Kobal, with vessel Math Collin, Lighting Assistant

Corporeal Forces -- 2 Strength: 6 Agility: 2
Ethereal Forces -- 4 Intelligence 9 Precision 7
Celestial Forces -- 4 Will: 11 Perception: 5
Vessel: Human/2 (Charisma/3, Status/1) Role/2 (Math Collin, Lighting Technician at the Opera)
Songs: Attraction (Ethereal/2), Charm (Corporeal/3, Ethereal/1), Entropy (Celestial/3), Motion (Corporeal/2)
Skills: Climbing/2, Dodge/1, Driving/2, Electronics/3, Emote/4, Fast-Talk/4, Lying/3, Tactics/2
Attunements: Habbalim of Kobal, Balseraph of Kobal, Prank

Lucrezio is desperate to regain his standing with Kobal -- who would have thought that "borrowing" the Necklace could go so drastically wrong? However, if he can pull off this Joke, it should be enough to regain his position and improve it.

He appears, in his Role, to be the sort of hard-working technician a supervisor would dream of: willing to work long hours, always helpful in trying to smooth over the (recent) quarrels between his co-workers, always keeping an eye on the stage. In fact, he causes most of the quarrels, and is wondering why he never found such a haven before: the place is full of emotional instability and edges. He comes across as an open and friendly assistant, but should the players hear him "mediating" a quarrel, they may notice that the water he throws on the flames is the equivalent of pure oil.

Ashamael, Shedim of Kobal, possessing John Samuels, Props

Corporeal Forces -- 2 Strength: 4 Agility: 4

Ethereal Forces -- 5 Intelligence: 12 Precision: 8
Celestial Forces -- 4 Will: 6 Perception: 10
Vessel: Human/2 (Status/2, Charisma/1)
Role: John Samuels, Props at the Opera
Songs: Entropy (Ethereal/2), Form (Ethereal/3), Shields (Corporeal/3, Celestial/2)
Skills: Dodge/3, Emote/2, Lying/3, Medicine/3, Move Silently/2, Ranged Weapon (Rifle/3), Throwing/2
Attunements: Shedim of Kobal, Calabim of Kobal

Ashamael has often collaborated with Lucrezio, and was unfortunately with him when he "borrowed" the Necklace, putting them on the run together. He is the subsidiary spirit in their partnership, but is extremely effective at acting subtly and from the shadows.

Ashamael is possessing and corrupting John Samuels, the Props man (who handles stage props): once known as a friendly and helpful elderly man that all the staff could take their problems to, Samuels is now an object of concern to many, as he has taken to drinking, leering at the female cast members, and is suspected of the recent rash of small thefts. Ashamael realizes that this is somewhat obvious, but cannot risk Dissonance or leaving his host. He will attempt to project geniality and helpfulness, but this is becoming tainted by a patina of selfishness and lust.

Terethel, Mercurian of David

Corporeal Forces -- 2 Strength: 4 Agility: 4
Ethereal Forces -- 4 Intelligence: 11 Precision: 5
Celestial Forces -- 3 Will: 6 Perception: 6
Vessel: Human/2 (Charisma/3, Status/5) Role/5 (Terence Mubin, Civic Architect)
Songs: Attraction (Corporeal/3), Charm (Ethereal/2), Healing (Corporeal/2)
Skills: Chemistry/2, Driving/3, Emote/2, Fighting (Karate/4), Knowledge (Architecture/5, Town Planning/3), Survival/3
Attunements: Mercurian of David, Deep Gaze

Terethel is comparatively new to the area: he holds a certain amount of influence with the wealthy city planners, and is using it to make sure that new buildings are of acceptable architectural standards. He also belongs to the Patrons of the Opera, who regularly attend performances en masse, and are due to attend the first night of *Fiat Justitia* shortly; while this may seem unusual for a Servitor of David, he is promoting group action and communication among a set of people who would rarely otherwise cooperate. He has developed an unusual fondness for the Opera itself, which is why he has reacted so strongly to seeing a Servitor of Asmodeus near it.

Terethel is easy-going and continually polite, with a manner honed by many expensive lunches. He will attempt to enlist other Celestials to help sort out Infernal problems, or deal with them in a subtle manner, realizing that he is not the most effective of fighters in a physical situation.

Focalor, Balseraph of Asmodeus

Corporeal Forces -- 2 Strength: 2 Agility: 6
Ethereal Forces -- 3 Intelligence: 7 Precision: 5
Celestial Forces -- 4 Will: 8 Perception: 8
Vessel: Human/3 (Charisma/2, Status/4) Role/5 (Michael Focals, Investment Analyst)
Songs: Entropy (Corporeal/2, Ethereal/3, Celestial/1), Harmony (Corporeal/1), Possession/3, Tongues (Ethereal/1)
Skills: Detect Lies/4, Dodge/2, Driving/2, Emote/3, Fast-Talk/3, Knowledge (Stock Market/3), Savoir-Faire/3, Small Weapon (Stiletto/2)
Attunements: Balseraph of Asmodeus, Habbalim of Asmodeus, Knight of Judgment

Focalor is an up-and-coming young Balseraph, with cooperative assistants. He does not have a great deal of experience, but is hoping that this may be the case which substantiates the rank he has gained. He knows that Lucrezio and Ashamael made off with a Relic "in the form of a necklace," and has a description of Lucrezio's Vessel, but is

otherwise short on information: however, he has reason to believe that there is a Shedim somewhere at or near the Opera House, so is following that lead.

Focalor is not interested in cooperating with any angels, as he feels this may lead to unwelcome scrutiny from Asmodeus. He is quite willing to let ignorant angels fight it out with his prey, however, and then try and take both of them down while weakened. Pleasant, with a wide range of mortal clients, he is the ideal person to make you believe that he is interested in your investments. Oh, and he has an excellent portfolio.

Namaah, Lilim of Asmodeus

Corporeal Forces -- 3 Strength: 5 Agility: 7
Ethereal Forces -- 4 Intelligence: 8 Precision: 8
Celestial Forces -- 2 Will: 4 Perception: 4
Vessel: Human/2 (Charisma/3, Status/2) Role/5 (Maria Namar, Secretary to Michael Focals)
Songs: Attraction (Ethereal/3, Celestial/2), Fangs/4, Dreams (Corporeal/2), Light (Corporeal/2)
Skills: Acrobatics/2, Dodge/3, Emote/2, Fighting (Tai Chi/3), Knowledge (Secretarial/3), Lockpicking/2, Move Silently/2, Ranged Weapon (Pistol/3), Seduction/2
Attunements: Lilim of Asmodeus, Lilim of Malphas, Dissonance Binding, Humanity
Discord: Geasa/5 owed to Asmodeus

Namaah projects the image of the ideal secretary: helpful, silent, always present and listening, with just a hint of subdued carnality. She tends to be the stealth/spying member of the team, gathering information for the other two to act. She has the same information as Focalor on the current mission.

An attractive young woman with razor-cut hair and a business suit, she can convince most people that she is merely taking notes or investigating on the behalf of Michael Focals. Her manner is invariably polite and hesitant: she carries a concealed pistol in her jacket. She may possibly see the benefits of giving angels some information, especially if her life is in the balance. One can always rearrange the facts in one's report if one is alive: harder if one is dead.

Kushiel, Calabim of Asmodeus, Thug

Corporeal Forces -- 5 Strength: 12 Agility: 8
Ethereal Forces -- 3 Intelligence: 4 Precision: 8
Celestial Forces -- 1 Will: 2 Perception: 2
Vessel: Human/4 (Charisma/2) Role/5 (Jonas Kushel, Bodyguard to Michael Focals)
Songs: Acid/3, Claws/2, Feet/2, Thunder (Corporeal/2), Tongue/3, Wings/4
Skills: Climbing/2, Dodge/3, Driving/4, Fighting (Brawling/5), Large Weapon/3, Move Silently/3, Running/1, Small Weapon (Razor/4), Survival/3, Tracking/4
Attunements: Calabim of Asmodeus

Kushiel is low on intelligence and high on muscle, and likes it that way. The bruiser member of the team, he hangs about until his targets are named, then takes them down as quickly as possible. He plays the part of bodyguard to Michael Focals, loitering in mirrored sunglasses and ripped leathers. He has the same information as Focalor on the current mission.

Kushiel is not likely to recognize Celestials unless something obvious makes it clear to him (such as wings, strange lights, and so on). His attitude will be to take them down: every angel killed is one the Forces of Hell won't have to worry about in the future. The others in the team will try and direct his attention to their real targets, but even so, he has been known to "make a mistake." He is rough-mannered, and grunts when he speaks at all.

Peter Guther, Manager of the Opera

Corporeal Forces -- 1 Strength: 1 Agility: 3

Ethereal Forces -- 2 Intelligence: 4 Precision: 4
Celestial Forces -- 2 Will: 4 Perception: 4
Status: 4
Charisma: 1
Skills: Computer Operation/2, Detect Lies/3, Emote/2, Fast-Talk/2, Knowledge (Opera/2, Finance/4), Savoir-Faire/2

It is a difficult job keeping an Opera House solvent, and Peter Guther runs on about eight cups of coffee a day to keep it going, what with meetings with patrons, stocks and shares, organizing staff and future programs, and the like. His secretary will attempt to keep out anyone who does not have genuine business with him.

He is in his fifties, balding, thin and wiry, with the beginnings of an ulcer that is not improving his temper. If the PCs can find some reason to speak with him, he will expect them to be to the point and intelligent. Time-wasters get shown the door. He or his secretary can provide personnel files on Gavin, Tania, Math Collin (Lucrezio's Vessel), and John Samuels (Ashamael's host).

Ben Dodd, Director of Fiat Justitia

Corporeal Forces -- 1 Strength: 2 Agility: 2
Ethereal Forces -- 3 Intelligence: 4 Precision: 8
Celestial Forces -- 1 Will: 1 Perception: 3
Status: 3
Charisma: 2
Skills: Dodge/1, Emote/3, Knowledge (Opera/4, Theater/3), Medicine/2, Singing/2

Ben Dodd is busy with the last few days of rehearsals for *Fiat Justitia.* He has held his post with the Opera House for eight years now, and is respected by the staff and by the audiences. He will not be amused by people attempting to interrupt his rehearsals, or distract his singers.

He is in his forties, and running to fat, with a black toupee, and tends to wear slacks and a polo shirt for rehearsals. Financial talk will not interest him, and civic matters will be viewed merely as a distraction: he will be ready to discuss the singers and stagehands, and knows a fair amount of personal history. He is worried by John Samuels' (Ashamael) recent decline, as he has known him for a long while now.

Emilio Morgensen, Conductor

Corporeal Forces -- 1 Strength: 2 Agility: 2
Ethereal Forces -- 2 Intelligence: 4 Precision: 4
Celestial Forces -- 2 Will: 3 Perception: 5
Status: 3
Charisma: 1
Skills: Dodge/1, Emote/4, Knowledge (Opera/3, Orchestra/4, Local History/2)

A bony 60-year-old with a vicious temper and cutting tongue, Emilio worked his way up from junior flautist to conductor, and knows the orchestra inside out. He will audition any potential musicians, though they are unlikely to be included in the First Night orchestra unless half the current group of musicians should go down with something.

Emilio thinks that Tania is underrated, and should be moving on rather than staying in minor roles. He knows most of Gavin's history (since he joined the orchestra) but willingly tolerates his personal oddities for the sake of his playing.

The Necklace

This is a delicate piece of work, silver set with a central large beryl and two smaller surrounding ones. While it appears made for a small neck, it will fit whatever neck it is

clasped around. When activated, the central beryl seems to pulse and flicker with ominous dark green lights. If unworn and unactivated, it is at -2 to Perception; if worn and active, it is at +6 to Perception.

Nobody is sure who created the necklace, and it has been in Kobal's private store for a long time now. If the Song of Thunder is used in its presence (within the range of hearing of the person wearing the necklace), all the effects become strictly physical (within the radius caused by the Song), causing Corporeal hits equal to the level of skill of the Song plus the total amount of Essence expended on it: this affects within-range structures as well as within-range living beings. The wearer of the necklace is immune from damage from the Song itself, though he may be harmed by collapsing masonry or other indirect effects.

It is unlikely that any PC would be allowed to keep this Relic, as it is very old and very powerful. Superiors are likely to confiscate it, or expect the PCs to hand it over as a matter of course.

The Opera

Fiat Justitia is the first and last work of a recently deceased young composer, Matthew Stockman, who was cut down in a traffic accident shortly after his opera was accepted for production. It basically concerns the rebellion against a despotic power, led by a young woman (the heroine and lead Soprano part) who is unhappily in love with the son (lead Tenor part) of the despotic villain (a Bass). All is resolved when the villain takes poison, and the hero and heroine resolve to lead the country into liberty together. The plot is not overly original, but the score and libretto are well done.

Timeline

Day 1

Morning: Angelic PCs are contacted by Terethel, who requests their presence at a coffee shop he knows that afternoon. He explains that this is the only convenient time he has for the next few days. Demonic PCs will be summoned by Kobal himself, or by some appropriate Servitor.

Afternoon: The meeting with Terethel. He explains his anxieties concerning Servitors of Asmodeus near the Opera House, especially given that *Fiat Justitia* is to be performed for the first time the day after tomorrow for an audience containing most of the City Council and other important figures. In his Role, Terethel is forced to appear at a number of events during this fundraising week, and he would not be very helpful in the event of physical battle, anyway. He requests that the PCs investigate.

Terethel can provide a number of convenient ways for the PCs to enter the Opera House, such as introductions to the Manager if they wish to pose as financial agents or the like, or a reference to the Conductor or Director if they intend to pose as musicians or singers. He can also provide a basic map of the Opera House, and information on *Fiat Justitia* itself. He cannot stay for long, though, as he is due to approve a set of architectural plans for a new hospital later in the afternoon.

Demonic PCs will be briefed on the fact that Ashamael and Lucrezio went AWOL with his Relic (the powers of the Relic will not be mentioned) and are now pursued by Servitors of the Game, who have traced them to the Opera House. The most important task is to foil the Servitors of the Game, preferably humiliatingly; then to collect the Relic, and the two Renegades. Of course, if they have a Joke in progress, they should be allowed to complete it first.

In the Opera House at this time, a rehearsal is in progress, and goes well. That evening, Gavin gives Tania a private coaching session. Ashamael has hidden the Necklace among a collection of stage jewelry, where the other fake gems effectively conceal it from casual notice. Should any PC be fortunate enough to find and remove it at any point, they are likely to be pursued by Ashamael, Lucrezio, and any other Servitor who knows about it, with extreme prejudice.

Day 2

Morning: At the Opera House, the soloists and chorus rehearse to piano in the practice rooms behind the stage. The orchestra rehearses in the orchestra pit, in front of the stage.

The Servitors of Asmodeus enter the Opera House, in their Roles, and Focalor has a long discussion with the Manager about potential investments. Kushiel slips off during this to scout around the Opera House: he does not encounter Lucrezio or Ashamael, but gets a general idea of the layout of the place. He is noticed by several of the cast and orchestra.

Lucrezio and Ashamael become aware of Kushiel's presence, and suspect that the Servitors of Asmodeus have discovered them. Lucrezio takes care to remain up in the lighting gallery. Ashamael corrupts his host further, smashing all the mirrors in the dancers' practice rooms while they are at lunch. This causes a great deal of concern when they return.

Afternoon and Evening: A long rehearsal of *Fiat Justitia,* followed by notes and practice. All cast members and orchestra are likely to be onstage or in the wings, or in the orchestra pit, or in the dressing rooms, during this. Lucrezio and Ashamael will both be busy in their Roles. The hunters of Asmodeus will use the opportunity to explore further. In the evening, Gavin will give Tania another intense coaching session in a private practice room. While both have every excuse to be around the Opera House, Tania is nervous about being caught in a private meeting with a man, and Gavin is paranoid that somebody will find out what they are doing, and stop Tania from singing. Should they suspect that someone is trying to spy on them, they will do their best to escape without being seen: if caught, they will try to bluff their way out, and may well question the pursuer's reason for being present.

Day 3

Morning: Further individual practicing for soloists and chorus and orchestra (unless last night's rehearsal was somehow disrupted, in which case a full rehearsal will be called). The Servitors of Asmodeus will haunt the Opera House, being sure something is going on here but not what.

Early Afternoon: No actual rehearsals in progress, though many of the cast and orchestra will be around the building.

One hour before performance: Lucrezio will perform his Celestial Song of Entropy upon the current lead soprano who is due to sing the heroine, leaving her babbling in her dressing room in the throes of a nervous breakdown. (Should this not be feasible, Ashamael will try and possess her, and cause her to do something which will make her unable to sing that night.) The role will be passed to her understudy, Tania, who will be terrified but steady. Outside, civic dignitaries will be arriving, including Terethel.

Performance: Before she goes on, Ashamael (assuming he still possesses John Samuels), or Lucrezio, if necessary, will pass Tania the Necklace, and make sure that she is wearing it. Tania, as the heroine, is due to enter after an opening chorus and sing her first great aria. Gavin will at that point play the agreed signal on his violin, and she will launch into her Song of Thunder.

Ashamael and Lucrezio will launch into an Invocation to Kobal, so that he can see and appreciate the Great Joke, and hopefully forgive their minor unauthorized indiscretion. If everything goes as planned, and he is summoned, he probably will.

Game Master Hints

The Servitors of Asmodeus can act as needed throughout the adventure, either to spur the PCs on if they are moving too slowly, or to hold them back if they are likely to end it all too fast.

Should the PCs suspect a Remnant, or suspect Gavin, research (probably through Terethel) will reveal that there was a battle here some ten years ago, in the course of which a Seraph of Yves was destroyed totally -- as far as anybody knows.

Ashamael will have to move to another host if he is discovered. In that case, he will break into the Props room to steal the Necklace, and keep it with him till he can give it to Tania. It should also be noted that Ashamael is aware of the story of *The Phantom of the Opera,* and will happily lead any PCs who suspect such a thing down into the cellars, there to waste their time. He might even strangle somebody.

Lucrezio is desperate to ensure that everything goes according to his plan, or he is doomed. Falling lights are a definite safety hazard, especially to inquisitive angels or Servitors of Asmodeus.

Terethel is hoping for minimum disruption to the Opera House. He is unlikely to get his wish.

Yves is likely to expect the PCs to take some action regarding Gavin -- at the very least bring him to some Tether of Yves, or speak to a Servitor of Yves about it. Gavin might still have some part to play in the War, once he understands what happened to him.

Lucrezio and Ashamael, if they survive, will probably either be pardoned by Kobal (and even rewarded) or running for their lives yet more desperately than before. They will certainly try and make the PCs the butt of a Joke or two -- vengeance is so amusing.

Tania is probably prime material for recruitment by the time this finishes, for one side or the other, as a Soldier of Heaven or Hell.

Operatic Terms

The Opera House itself has a standard theater layout: the Stage, the Orchestra Pit in front of it, a slanted level of seats facing it (the Stalls), a Lower Balcony of seats, an Upper Balcony (commonly referred to as the Gods), several Boxes on the Lower Balcony level and close to the Stage for well-paying patrons (such as Terethel).

Backstage: behind the stage itself, an area containing dressing rooms, rehearsal rooms, stairs up and down and equipment storerooms. Large backdrops or Props are stored in the cellar.

Dresser: a person assigned to assist a lead actor or actress with their costume and makeup.

Orchestra Pit: where the orchestra sits during a performance to play, directly in front of the stage.

Proscenium Arch: the arch which frames the stage as one looks at it. Lighting equipment is set up above it (spotlights and the like) so that the audience cannot see it but the stage is well lit. Backdrops are hung at that level until they are lowered (by levers and wires in the Wings) to be used as the backdrop to a scene.

Props: stage properties, meaning items which are used by the actors in the course of a production, such as fake daggers, guns, jewelry, and the like. The person who takes care of the items and manages them is commonly known as "Props."

Stagehands: these people adjust the scenery during breaks between acts or scenes, and tend to do any heavy lifting or moving.

Wings: to either side of the stage, leading backwards to the Backstage, concealed by curtains and by the sides of the Proscenium Arch. Actors make their entries and exits here: during a performance, the wings tend to be full of actors waiting to come on, Stagehands waiting to make adjustments in the scenery, nervous directors, Dressers, and so on.

Not a very convenient place to loiter idly.

Team-Play Variants for Atlas Games' On The Edge

By Matthew D. Grau

When ***Magic: the Gathering*** first came out, one of the play styles that I always enjoyed was my group's team-play variants. Our variants presented a completely different slant to the game, changing our tactics and deckbuilding strategies. Everyone in our group had a separately-designed deck for team play, and some of us even had different decks to coordinate with different teammates. For some reason, team play was more rewarding than one-on-one play.

Having given up ***M:tG*** long ago, I have missed cooperative team play in collectible card games. Everyone I played with switched to ***On the Edge*** in the fall of 1994, and have been playing religiously ever since. Keeping with tradition, I began to work up cooperative team-play rules about a year ago. After playtesting, here's what I came up with.

You'll notice that at least two of the variants are a bit devious and cutthroat. Well, ***On the Edge*** is a game about Archconspirators. It's only fitting.

Co-Conspirator Team-Play Variant

Influence Totals

The first major change in this variant is that all teammates are working toward the same Influence goal as opposed to individual goals. All Influence generated during play by members of the same team is recorded under one total, with no differentiation made as to the player. Thus, if Matthew and Lance are co-conspirators and Matthew cranks for two Influence and Lance for three in a given turn, it is simply recorded as five for the team as opposed to recording the points individually.

To determine the game's Influence goal, count each team as a single player. Thus, if three teams of two are playing, the Influence total for the game is sixteen (for three teams) and not ten (for six players).

Pooled Resources

One of the big advantages of team play is the sharing of resources. Each player not only has his own resources to use, but the unused resources of his teammates. For this purpose, resources can be cranked on your teammate's turn to share resources.

The only restriction for sharing resources is that bonus pull is negated when it is shared. Thus, if Friends in the Great Men Barrio is cranked for a teammate, that teammate only receives the one generic pull generated and not the one bonus pull to call Glorious Lords. Furthermore, cards with specific pull, such as Intelligence Contacts, cannot be shared. After all, someone else's friends may not be as inclined to help you out.

Example: Lance and Matthew are teammates. Lance has two Friends in

Broken Wings, two Contacts in the Art Scene, and an Intelligence Contact in play. Matthew has two Friends in the Great Men Barrio, two Astral Wisdoms, and a UN Forces in play. On his turn, Lance cranked one of the Friends in Broken Wings and one of the Contacts in the Art Scene for his own devices.
It is now Matthew's turn. In addition to the Resources he has in play, he also has access to Lance's uncranked resources, excluding bonus pull. Keeping with the rules, Lance's spare Friends in Broken Wings and Intelligence contacts cannot be used by Matthew since they only generate specific pull. But, Matthew still has access to the one generic pull that is generated by the Contacts in the Art Scene. Matthew decides to use it, and Lance cranks the Resource.

An interesting tactic that develops is the use of your teammate's resources before your own. It's all a question of crank/uncrank timing. Let me illustrate through an example.

Example: The same scenario applies from above. Matthew only wants to call Break-Bones, who has a cost of one. Instead of using his resources to call him, he uses Lance's spare generic pull from the Contacts in the Art Scene. This way, when Lance's turn comes around, all of Matthew's resources are uncranked for Lance to use in addition to Lance's own which uncrank at the beginning of his turn.

Secrets

Secrets always have their full effect, regardless if they are shared or not. Secrets are not as fickle as friends.

Example: Matthew has a Kergillian's Secret in play, and it is uncranked on Lance's turn. If he wanted to, Lance could crank the secret to gain the full effects of "Crank to gain 3 Pull to call Kergillian cards. Crank any time to add +1 to any attack on a Kergillian."

Pooled Traits

For purposes of calling bulleted cards, you may use any trait on Characters and Resources within your team.

Example: Lance wants to call a Hostility Channeler into play, but he doesn't have the trait Psychic on any of the Characters or Resources in his own conspiracy. He looks over, and Matthew has Lope in play, who is a Character with the trait Psychic. Thus, Lance is able to call the Hostility Channeler.

Sharing Cards

All gear, conditions, whammies and environmentals may be played in any of your teammate's conspiracies.

On the other hand, Characters may only be called into your conspiracy. Once they are in play, you may crank them to move them into any legal position in a teammate's conspiracy. Regardless, you still control their actions although they act on that player's turn.

Example: One of Lance's blockers just got popped, and he is in dire need of a character to defend his back ranks. On his turn, Matthew plays Gayeth Silver into his own conspiracy. He then cranks Gayeth and moves him into Lance's conspiracy. Unfortunately, Lance's back ranks are still exposed since Gayeth is cranked, but only for a turn.
On Lance's turn, Gayeth uncranks. The only thing that Lance has to remember is that Matthew still controls Gayeth's actions. Gayeth, even though controlled by Matthew, can only take his normal actions on Lance's turn.

Communication

Teammates are allowed to leave the room, show each other their hands, and table-talk all they want. They are not allowed to swap cards or give cards to each other.

Backstabbing Variant

The Backstabbing variant follows the same basic format as the Co-Conspirator variant above, but with a twist. It is essentially a hybrid between team and individual play.

Individual Goals

Each team still keeps track of Influence totals as a group, but you keep track of each individual's total separately. In this case, the player on the winning team with the most individual Influence is the winner.

Communication

Unlike the Co-conspirator variant, players are not allowed to leave the table or show each other their hands, but they are still allowed to table-talk.

You might say this variant could get ugly. Players might lie, withhold help, or even attack their own teammates. That's right, they can and they do.

The Tables Turn

The Tables Turn variant follows the same basic format as the Co-Conspirator or Backstabbing variants above, but with another twist.

Switching Alliances

Teammates may switch teams on their turn. Each individual player has the right to reject his teammates and to take his individual influence to another team. Of course, he needs to be accepted by that team. Alternatively, the player could decide to take everybody on all by himself.

All characters of the switching teammate in other conspiracies must crank on their turn to come back to the owning player's conspiracy. All characters in the switching teammate's conspiracy from other teammates' conspiracies must do the same.

Commitment

Once a team has generated more than half of the necessary Influence to win the game, that team is committed. That is, they cannot switch teams unless their Influence total drops below the halfway mark.

Example: Matthew and Lance are one team, and Woody and Jeff are on another. They are playing the Co-conspirator: Tables Turn variant. Currently, Matthew has generated four Influence and Lance has generated five for a team total of nine. Woody has generated seven Influence and Jeff has generated two for a team total of nine. On Lance's turn, he and Woody decide that they'd really work well together, so Lance abandons Matthew and Woody abandons Jeff. Lance and Woody are now a team with a team Influence total of 12, and Matthew and Jeff are now a team with an Influence total of six. Lance and Woody are now committed, unless their team Influence drops below 12, and Matthew and Jeff are unhappy.

No One Comes Back Variant

This is just a fun variant that I thought I'd throw in, which can be used in both individual and team play. Have you ever been sick of the guy who plays Robert Richardson, pops him, gets one Influence point, plays another Robert Richardson, pops him, gets one Influence point, ad nauseam? Or the player with so many Monique D'Aubainnes in his deck that you just can't seem to get rid of her? Then this is the variant for you. It forces players to rely on a broad base of characters rather than the four or five tough staples of which they use insane multiples.

Dead, Dead, Dead

Every time a character is popped, treat that character as if a Dead, Dead, Dead Condition (D25) were played on him. This means that any non-Tulpa character who has been popped remains in play in terms of uniqueness only. Practically speaking, any character who is popped can't be played again. Thus, only one of each non-Tulpa character can be played each game.

The Bad Poetry House Rule

I don't know about you, but to me Burford J. Slystick just seems to keep popping up everywhere. Personally, I can't stand the character and neither can most people with whom I play. So, I came up with an interesting little house rule.

Whenever Burford J. Slystick comes into play, he gains the following ability:

Any player who pops Burford J. Slystick gains one Influence. Burford J. Slystick's controlling player is excluded from this rule.

Needless to say, no one uses Burford when we play. The only exception is Paul Nurnberger, but that's a story for another time.

This article is dedicated to Lance P. Johnstone, with whom I wasted many hours playing ***On the Edge.*** God rest his soul.

Oh, and Lance -- I think I'm still up on you.

Palace of Mirrors

by Alison Brooks and Phil Masters

This is another in an occasional series of articles based on material that wouldn't quite fit in ***GURPS Places of Mystery.*** It deals with a slightly more recent building than most in that book, but one as atmospheric and rich in history as any -- the Palace of Versailles, in France.

Versailles ranks as perhaps the greatest royal palace in Europe, and one of the greatest in the world. It is a masterpiece of architecture, its gardens are phenomenal exercises in landscape design, and its rooms are filled with great works of painting, sculpture and furniture-making. It is also *big*; the sheer scale of the building and grounds, and the quantity of complex decoration applied to them, are remarkable in themselves.

Versailles is not an obvious setting for supernatural events -- but at least one curious ghost story lingers about the place (see below), and some of the French nobility dabbled in such matters. Royal mistresses may have sought the aid of "witches" and poisoners to see off rivals.

In any case, Versailles does hold great interest as a location. History has been made in the palace; among other things, the treaty that ended the American Revolution was signed here.

The Beginning

Versailles is legally a city -- actually, more like a suburb of Paris. In 1624, it was a village surrounded by marshes and woods. Game was plentiful, and King Louis XIII decided he wanted a hunting lodge in the area. He bought a good-sized farmhouse, and had it rebuilt to suit his tastes.

In 1661, his son, Louis XIV, had a problem. His finance minister, Nicolas Fouquet, had built the finest chateau in France, at Vaux-le-Vicomte -- better than any of the royal palaces. Fouquet, who had made plenty of enemies and engaged in some creative accounting, promptly was arrested and thrown into prison, but Louis was determined to prove that he could be as great a patron of the arts as anyone. He took over Fouquet's creative team: the architect Le Vau, the decorator Le Brun and the landscape architect Le Ntre. They received orders to transform Versailles into a true palace.

Mere facts, such as that the soil was poor and the water supply too unreliable for grand fountains, meant little. The work went on for decades, employing up to 36,000 workmen and 6,000 horses. The builders drained 37,000 acres of land and diverted a river to feed a water-supply system 100 miles long. In 1678, a 31-year-old architect named Jules Hardouin-Mansart took over from Le Vau, and kept the job for 30 years. In 1682, the king moved his court and government to the new palace, while Mansart added wings to the north and south. The completed building is about 1,900 feet long. A comparable building project could be an interesting feature for an "advanced" kingdom in any fantasy campaign.

The Court

Louis XIV lived in the palace with his family and 5,000 servants, attended by a thousand great nobles with their 4,000 servants, all of whom lived on site or in annexes. The town housed 9,000 soldiers to act as guards, and perhaps a thousand or more lesser nobles and petitioners always would be wandering around the place in the hope of favors or

patronage.

All of this was run with immense formality. Everything that the king did, from getting up in the morning to going to bed at night, was attended by servants trained to perform functions in the correct order. Not merely servants -- the aristocrats considered it a great honor to assist the king in washing and dressing. The decorations of the palace are intricate, elegant and opulent, and match the styles of art and music that were encouraged there.

This great court actually served a political purpose. Louis was an absolute monarch; he was the center of France, and the rituals emphasized his importance. Furthermore, Versailles acted as a magnet for powerful subjects. During Louis' childhood, there had been a number of aristocratic revolts against the growing power of the monarchy; now, Versailles kept the aristocrats under his gaze. If they did not come to court, they marked themselves as uncivilized, eccentric and suspicious; if they did, they had to act and do exactly as the king commanded. All power and influence flowed to the king, and was his to control -- personally.

Later History

Louis XIV died in 1715, having survived many of his family. A child of five, his great-grandson Louis XV, succeeded him. The new monarch grew up to follow many of his great-grandfather's procedures, but he was not as clever or effective, and French power waned. But Versailles continued as the seat of government, and further buildings were added in 1756. Louis XV died in 1774, and was succeeded by his grandson, Louis XVI. By now, France had many internal problems, and the new king lacked the ability to deal with them. The court continued to live in luxury at Versailles, while the people were poor and starving. The French Revolution resulted.

The revolutionaries had in fact met in the tennis courts of Versailles, in 1789, but they displayed a natural dislike of the palace, which fell into disrepair. Even the Emperor Napoleon took no interest in it. Fortunately for modern tourists, in 1830 political change gave France a new king, Louis Philippe, who took a personal interest in Versailles. He poured money from his personal fortune into restoration, and in 1837 the palace was declared a national museum. Since then, that has been its usual role, although it has also been used as an HQ in warfare and a setting for the signature of great treaties. For example, the Germans who defeated France in 1870-71 installed themselves there, no doubt with a sense of symbolism.

Today, Versailles is open to the public, and receives thousands of visitors per day.

The Site

The Main Building

The palace consists of a central block, incorporating Louis XIII's original hunting lodge, facing onto a courtyard -- the Royal Court. Mansart's two long wings extend off on either side. Two free-standing blocks define another courtyard, the Minister's Court, beyond which is an urban square, the Place d'Armes. On the other side of that are a pair of magnificent stable blocks, designed to hold 2,500 horses and 200 carriages.

The central block actually encloses a third small courtyard -- the Marble Court (which was originally paved in black and white marble). On the other side, facing the gardens, is the Hall of Mirrors, or *Galerie des Glaces.* This ground-floor gallery is 246 feet long, 33 feet wide and 43 feet high with 17 windows reflected in 17 enormous mirrors separated by green marble pillars. Its ceiling is painted with panels glorifying Louis XIV. Originally, it was illuminated by gilded candelabras and crystal chandeliers. This block also includes royal apartments, with the king's bedchamber in a precisely central position on the upper floor. The two wings are built round small, enclosed courtyards; that on the north side includes a chapel and an opera house.

The Grounds

Versailles has 250 acres of formal gardens, all part of the grand plan. These are arranged around two axes, at right

angles to each other, and filled with neat flower beds, as well as hundreds of bronze statues and intricate fountains. A central avenue leads down to the "Grand Canal." This runs for a full mile through the park; in the time of the monarchy, it was filled with small boats on which courtiers could take pleasure jaunts. It is nearly 70 yards wide, with a second, slightly smaller channel cutting across it at right angles.

The park itself is studded with additional gardens, planted groves, and smaller buildings. These include the *Trianons*, where the king would often relax with his friends and current mistress. These are full-scale houses, with apartments and reception rooms; the "Grand Trianon" now includes apartments for the use of the president of France and visiting heads of state (not open to the public, naturally); the "Petit Trianon," which was built by Louis XV, is an architectural gem. It was much used by Louis XVI's wife, Marie Antoinette, for relaxation; she and her friends liked to play at the "simple life" there, and she had a "hamlet" of country-style cottages built around it, where they could pretend to be peasants. (Ironically, it was here that she was told that the real peasants were marching on Versailles in open revolt.)

The Ghosts of the Trianon

On 10 August ,1901, two Englishwomen visiting Versailles had an experience that they believed to be supernatural. In 1911, they published their experiences, pseudonymously, under the title "An Adventure." One interesting aspect of this is that they were credible witnesses: Miss Annie Moberley became the first principal of St. Hugh's College, Oxford, and Miss Eleanor Jourdain succeeded her in the post. No one has ever suggested that they were dishonest.

In 1901, they took a holiday together in Paris, and while in Versailles, they decided to visit the Petit Trianon, but got lost. They both apparently entered a dreamlike state, in which they saw -- and spoke to -- people dressed in 18th century clothing. The atmosphere during their experiences was oppressive, the landscapes appeared flat, like a painting, and distances appeared distorted.

Their experiences started when they met two gardeners or officials, who directed them to the Trianon. They passed a "kiosk," which they thought was the Temple of Love, although they later decided it was neither this nor the Belvedere, but some building no longer in existence. A man at this kiosk, who did not speak to or even look at them, felt evil and threatening to both of them. At this moment, another man ran up behind them (sent by the gardeners?), and gave them further directions. They reached the back of the Trianon, and were directed round to the front by a servant who seemed to have come out of a boarded-up door. On a lawn, Miss Moberley (but not Miss Jourdain) saw a lady sketching or reading. They later decided that this was Marie Antoinette. They also believed that they had seen the grounds as they were in the 18th rather than the 20th century, and exited the gardens through a coach-way no longer in existence.

Unfortunately, neither mentioned it to the other, and they did not write their experiences down until some weeks later. (The published version was written five years afterward.) Their later research was geared towards proving that their experiences were a slip in time, rather than to discovering whether confusion, memory tricks and people wearing period costume had misled them.

After the publication of "An Adventure," other people came forward to recount having seen (and in a few cases talked to) ghostly figures at Versailles, although none had such a long or varied experience. Opinions as to what happened are mixed to this day. One perhaps significant fact is that many of the visions at Versailles occurred during thundery weather, which some claim is conducive to the supernatural.

Scenario Seed: Commercial Understanding

In the cyberpunk world of the 21st century, Versailles still stands. It's now owned by an international entertainment conglomerate, as a highly profitable attraction for wealthy tourists, and they run, maintain and guard it scrupulously. They also rent out sections of the building to anyone with enough funds.

The Hall of Mirrors itself is being hired for a day. Two multinationals -- one German, one Texan -- have been fighting a vicious corporate war for the last two years; now they are signing a peace treaty ("memorandum of commercial understanding"). Someone on the negotiating committee suggested that renting Versailles would be a nice touch.

The trouble is that neither corp *quite* trusts the other yet, and the entertainment corp's security force -- while generally competent -- isn't used to dealing with problems of this type. So they are hiring the PCs to provide extra muscle and skills. (Alternatively, the PCs might be hired or persuaded to sabotage or spy on this event.)

This could be a complex job; apart from the two main participants, there could be all sorts of factions interested in sabotaging the peace, or gaining revenge for events of the corporate war. And, of course, if anyone damages the building, the owners are going to be *highly* unamused.

Resources

- *The Chateau de Versailles*
- Paris Guide: Versailles contains floor plans for the Chateau de Versailles. The site is in French.

The Ogre Point of View in Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay

By Eric Oppen

Of all the races that could be suitable for PCs, the Ogre gets by far the least attention. Despite a neutral alignment and (according to the published texts) a long history of mercenary service to humans, very little thought is given to the ogre point of view.

And yet, such a point of view has to exist. Ogres do not spring full-grown to life *ex nihilo*; where do they grow up? Why are they always so hungry? What about their religious beliefs -- does the "Great Maw" have clerics, and do Ogres ever worship other gods? Their intelligence is not so low as to prevent them from attaining literacy -- do they ever learn to read and write? Do they have a culture of their own? What is it like?

All matters pertaining to Ogres are colored by their attitude toward food. Their hunger is an all-pervading ache that is with them at all times, rather like a man's sex drive. A sated ogre is almost a contradiction in terms. Their need for food is both physical and psychological. If they do not eat at least as much as would keep four men alive for a day, every single day, they begin to decline and become depressive, due to low blood-sugar. Those huge bodies and that tremendous strength require a great deal of fuel to keep them going. In game terms, they must roll vs. Toughness every day without their daily minimum of food, (which can be defined very loosely indeed; see below) or lose 1 point of Toughness and/or one point of Initiative. Once they have a chance to feed back up, they may gain back the lost points as follows: every day where double or more normal food intake occurs, a successful save vs. Toughness will result in the regaining of one point of Toughness or Initiative, whichever was brought lower by starvation.

Their eternal quest for enough food to keep their big bodies going is greatly aided by some of the changes that happened when their ancestors were warped from Human to Ogre. Their jaw muscles are several times as strong as a man's, and their teeth are much sharper and tougher -- to an Ogre, chewing up leather is no trouble at all. Also, their digestions have been compared to a blast furnace; anything organic will do, in a pinch. In Grumbarth, "leather" and "Jerky" are the same word. They can eat hay easily, and other things that humans and their allied races, such as dwarves and elves, cannot due to high cellulose content or other factors.

They are nearly completely immune to poison administered orally, and can digest long-rotted food that would make other races ill with no problem. Of course, the feature of Ogrish appetite most of interest to other races is their casual attitude toward what we would call cannibalism. Not only do they often eat members of other sapient races, a practice otherwise only seen among goblinoids and creatures of Chaos, but they eat their own weaklings and elderly. To an Ogre, this is part of life; they are Social Darwinists, one and all. Who does not eat, is eaten, and no Ogre intends to be eaten himself until he has no strength left in him, for without his huge strength, he can no longer obtain food. Any Ogre's very worst nightmare is to be unable to obtain food; a starved Ogre goes through agonies worse than anybody could ever imagine.

Ogres do not live purely for eating, though. They have another activity that they love just as much, one that gains them the food without which they'd rather be dead: fighting. Whether against "humies" in the pay of a Champion of Chaos, or against goblinoids or Chaos Beastmen in the pay of the Empire, it's all one to them. Part of any contract with Ogrish mercenary units is a clause allowing them to at least eat the bodies of fallen enemies. This reduces the strain on the friendlies' commissary department and satisfies the Ogres at the same time.

Other intelligent species are seen with good-natured, contemptuous tolerance by Ogres; "edible, but amusing as well," sums up most Ogres' views. Let's face it -- if you were ten or twelve feet tall, strong as an ox and very difficult to even hurt badly enough to notice, you'd be pretty confident yourself! An Ogre who's accepted some "slims" as friends might

make jokes about how they'd taste and how to best cook them, but he'll also laugh off most insults (except for "slim!") and be very protective toward his vulnerable friends/pets. The fact that "slims" will often pay Ogres to do what they do best, fight, and then let them eat the bodies of the fallen, is icing on the cake.

Elves are generally seen as more trouble to catch than they're worth; an Ogre is at a disadvantage in the thick forests they favor, and even an Ogre will eventually succumb to enough longbow arrows fired from out of his reach by archers he can't even see. Dwarves and Gnomes are seen as wealthy employers who keep their word. Halflings are considered very useful by Ogres, both as cooks and as food themselves. Humans are considered delicious, but very dangerous game when on their home ground.

Ogres have a culture of sorts of their own, but very few descriptions of it exist -- observing an alien culture where you're considered delicious is not the easiest thing in the world. Grumbarth, the Ogrish language, has a primitive, runic alphabet of its own, used almost exclusively by the priestly class or the extremely rare Ogrish spellcasters. Most Ogre settlements are semi-nomadic. When an area has been eaten bare, they'll move on -- and when Ogres consider an area "eaten bare," you can be very sure indeed that it is! If no abandoned (voluntarily or otherwise) dwellings are available, they will build their own, but since Ogres are rather lazy, easy-going folk who take life as it comes, they prefer to use pre-built shelters. When they do build their own, the results are not very impressive, but when you're as big and tough as an Ogre, a little weather won't bother you much, as long as meals are regular and plentiful.

The other form Ogre settlements take is mercenary camps. Many Ogres spend their entire lives in these, traveling around from one war to another. In any army, the Ogres form their own community, interacting with comrades-in-arms only as much as they must; this suits both sides well, as it removes temptation from the path of the hungrier or stupider Ogres.

Ogres would say that they are a religious, pious race. An Ogre that does not revere the Great Maw and its clerics is almost unheard of; even those few Ogres that have converted to other faiths (such as that of Ulric) almost invariably continue to offer prayer and sacrifice to the Great Maw as well, in hopes of attaining to the Ogre paradise of continuous feasting and fighting. The doctrines of the Great Maw are simple, and boil down to a few points that even the stupidest Ogre can comprehend:

1 Treat your food as your life, for it is your life.
2 The battle is to the strongest, and might is right.
3 No weakling or non-Ogre has any rights that an Ogre need respect, unless backed up by sufficient force to punish the Ogre.

Priests of the Great Maw may use Battle Magic spells, as well as some Elemental Magic.

The cult is neutral-to-contemptuous of other races' deities; in Great Maw mythology, other gods exist only so that the Great Maw may eventually devour them. The Gods of Chaos and Law are both regarded with utter loathing, for spoiling good food.

Shrines to the Great Maw are simple, and generally are found on sites where a memorable feast occurred. Places where food is easily obtained,such as a cave-full of rapidly-reproducing, stupid Goblinoids, tend to become shrines as well, with a priest or two on staff. Ogre family life is rather loosely-structured. A female will mate with whichever male takes her fancy at the moment, although gifts of food to influence a maiden heart are far from unknown. When born, Ogre babies are scrutinized by the mother and other Ogres; any which do not "smell right" or who are obviously mutated are eaten at once. Once past this test, Ogre children are greatly loved by all Ogres.

An Ogre child is the only being on earth that could induce an Ogre to part with even some of its precious food, and one sure way to rouse even the most placid, sated Ogres into a roaring, killing rage is to casually mention a threat to their young. Ogres are aware that they are a rare race, and although they would admit that a large population of Ogres would eat the world itself bare, they still do not like the idea of future comrades-in-arms and -gluttony killed before they can start contributing to the family larder. This one little quirk of Ogre thinking has killed more goblinoids than dwarves and disease combined; an attack on an Ogre settlement or camp that kills young Ogres or pregnant Ogresses will result in the perpetrators being tracked down, no matter where they are, and then eaten alive -- slowly, with lots of

spicy sauce.

As Ogres move into the adolescent years, the buzz-saw appetite that plagues all Ogres is no longer sated automatically by first go at whatever noshes are available. This is to encourage the young Ogre to go out and get his own, showing what he is made of and contributing to the family larder. Also, at about this time, young Ogres and Ogresses start noticing each other, and matings occur.

Ogre adulthood is one spent mainly in satisfying their passion for fighting and eating. There are a few Ogre academics, though . . . the priests and priestesses of the Great Maw keep an eye on the young of whatever settlement they are in, and the most intelligent are offered the chance of service. The priesthood of the Great Maw is very informal, for the most part, and only an Ogre can spot an Ogre Cleric.

Even rarer, but not utterly unknown, are Ogre wizards. Most Ogres do not have the attention span to complete the studies to become a wizard, and almost no teachers are willing to contend with a pupil who *needs* a snack break every hour. The very few Ogrish wizards specialize almost exclusively in Battle Magic and are of extremely high status in their communities, feared for their power and famed for their wisdom. Groffhyurg the Enormous, the only Ogre ever known to have attained the fourth level of wizardry, is said to have been the only Ogre ever to actually die of overeating. Gifts of food given him by other Ogres to propitiate him and enlist his aid bloated him to the point where he is said to have been nearly spherical, before his heart finally gave out. An Ogre will wish his friend well by saying: "May you find Groffhyurg's end."

Ogre Artisans are invariably smiths, the practical, lazy Ogrish temperament does not lend itself to most other artisans' pursuits. Only the pressing need of Ogres for armor and weapons in their size would make an Ogre consider the effort required to learn the smith's trade. As it stands, almost all Ogre smiths specialize in reworking captured armor and weapons to suit Ogrish users; the only other sources come from employers of mercenaries, when the Ogres think to ask for this as payment for their services.

With this background, the Ogres can take their place as a comprehensible part of the Warhammer World; instead of stupid, gluttonous killing machines, they are individuals with a culture, a place in the world, and a point of view that makes sense to them, even if to no one else.

An Adventure for *GURPS Traveller*

by M.J. Dougherty and Neil A. Frier

Art by Dan Smith

Referee's Notes

The adventure occurs in milieu 0 in the 8th year of the Imperium in the Apge system (Core 0402). At present, Apge is the center of a pocket Empire, the Apge Consortium, an economic grouping of eight worlds.

The Apge Consortium gains most of its finance from the Imperial trade between Core and Vland. However, Apge itself is an industrial powerhouse and its shipyards are famous for their workmanship and economic prices.

The Apge system has four planets and a large outer planetoid belt. Apge is in the closest orbit followed by Tronda, Badestone, Gromet and the Cronia Belt. Apart from Apge the other worlds are frozen rocky bodies. It should also be noted that Apge has no gas giant and fuel is only available on the planet or at the Starport.

Apge

Starport Class IV. A very good port with good shipyards and a large orbital port.
Diameter: 1,243 miles (2,000 km). *Atmosphere:* Standard mix heavily polluted by the world's heavy metals. *Surface Water:* 26% divided into two small seas and several large lakes. *Climate:* Average 43C ranging from 0C to 134C. *Population:* 121,000, all of whom live in Port town in the Southern Polar region. *Government:* Corporate technocracy. *Control Rating:* 3. *TL:* 9.

Apge is run by an elite council of six directors, one from each of the six largest corporations. This is decided upon examination of shares very five years. The Apge Port Authority has always had a director on the Elite Council and is seen by many as the "inner power."

Apge believes in choice, and its legal system reflects this with individuals left to take care of themselves. Firearms are, however, strictly controlled and only citizens can apply for a rare gun permit. The legal system is enforced by Rent-a-cops, a private firm which patrols areas who have paid their insurance. All but the poorest citizens pay this insurance.

The technology of Apge is above Imperial Standard. The heavy metal pollutants and the world's huge gravity provided the push to develop technology such as advanced gravitics and life support systems.

The world's close orbit provides a harsh dry environment with the summer heat raging to 134C in the great uplands Equatorial deserts and 0C at the poles during the short winters. Due to the heat, the human population has clung to a line of islands in the world's southern polar sea, where it is only 68c in summer. In this 1,077-km strip around the worlds southern cap live the 121,000 people on islands now totally enclosed in residential and ore processing domes and together form one city: "Port Town."

The atmosphere is heavily tainted due to the massive amounts of heavy metals which form a large percentage of Apge's crust and core. Full face filter masks are a necessity as the pollutants can irritate the eyes. The temperature also requires the wearing of desert survival suits (often called "second skins" on Apge) for anyone going outside the Domes. In the equatorial regions, a full EVA or Vacc suit must be worn as the simple second skin will not protect you from the heat.

The world's second problem is its huge gravity (another product of the heavy metals) which requires the Domes to be built with huge gravitic grids to ensure a consistent one-g. Outside, people need to stay in vehicles or wear full grav harnesses. The grav harness is an exoskeleton suit which forms a grid over the entire body, allowing normal 1g operation in the world's 2.48g environment.

The people are happy with their corporate government. The council not only governs Apge, but the seven other worlds of the system, using a free trade association which is dominated by Apge corporations. On Apge, the main industries are mining and the starport. The mines are located in the heart of upland deserts where robots assist miners in enclosed vehicles to strip-mine the heavy metals. The shipyards and port are classed as Class IV but could soon attain Class V classification, as the Apge Port Authority continues to reinvest all its profits back into expanding the facilities.

Flora and Fauna

Due to the high gravity, animal life tends toward multi-short-legs with exoskeleton frames, while the plants are of spreading and not rising varieties. The animal life is inedible due to the pollutants, and do not pose any threat to humans. There is no native animal on Apge longer than six inches. The plants are also inedible, but one -- called Amealia's Fire after the explorer who discovered it -- uses the heavy metals in the soil to color its leaves, making the plant a source of a rare natural dye.

Badestone

Starport Class I.
Diameter: 4,275 miles (6,880 km). *Atmosphere:* Very thin and tainted by Badestone Syndrome. *Surface Water:* 16% frozen across the surface. *Gravity:* 0.54g. *Climate:* -174C. *Population:* 4,000 people living at the starport dome. *Government:* Corporate technocracy. *Control Rating:* 5. *TL:* 8.

Apart from Apge the only other world to be populated in the system is Badestone, the third planet. The world is governed by the Apge Frontier Development Office, a private corporation owned by Apge Port Authority and the Exortom Corporation (one of the six largest corporations) which runs the world efficiently and profitably. The A.F.D.O protects Badestone's "treasure" by enforcing a police state with people having few rights.

The technology of Badestone is just below imperial standard and lower than the home world. The technology is however high enough to provide for the world's population Badestone is the site of an ancients base in the form of a shattered dome. The world itself appears to have been damaged, with its atmosphere almost destroyed and a flesh eating disease being introduced which still requires full vacc suits to be worn. Rigorous decontamination procedures are required when entering the starport dome.

The Apge Frontier Development Office runs the facility to research the Ancients Dome and attempt to find a cure for Badestone Syndrome. However, to help finance the research the Badestone Space Port is run as a free-port with no custom dues which helps to keep a constant flow of free traders heading for Badestone and generates trade and profit for the facility.

The Adventure

1. A Poor Arrival

The adventure occurs just after the "Dashgad War" [*Editor's Note:* detailed in the previous adventure "Cold night on Dashgad" and its sequel, "Long night on Dashgad," which will run soon.] The characters arrive at Apge, the homeworld of Kotin Parnaby. After the death of her husband and the destruction of Smit Town, Kotin decided to return to her homeworld with her children John Jr. and Amanda.

The characters arrival in the system however does not go according to plan, however, as the ship shudders as soon as it emerges from jump and the computer informs the characters that the jump regulator has malfunctioned.

Once the ship docks at Apge high port it becomes clear that the regulator needs to be completely replaced and that it has also caused a series of minor problems with the ships navigation systems. To buy replacements is well beyond the characters' current finances. A grateful Kotin Parnaby tells the characters that her father works at the A.F.D.O office in Port Town on Apge and that he may have a way of helping the characters.

2. One of those days!

The port authority shuttle has huge wings designed to assist lift in Apge's standard atmosphere and low gravity. They retract like that of a huge beetle as it settles into the deep warm water of the Gulf of Toran in the safety of the Apge Downport harbor. Port Town itself is a collection of totally enclosed islands in the Southern Polar Sea centered around huge ore processing factories whose waste colors the air orange and black for hundreds of miles.

Once docked, the characters follow Mrs. Parnaby into the harbor's main warehouse sector a large area filled with brokers' offices, handlers, pubs and warehouses covering five stories and connected via grav-chutes and walkways.

On the third level, Mrs. Parnaby leads the characters to the offices of A.F.D.O., a small but well decorated office with very plush furniture. Once inside, a droid sees to their refreshments while a holo-projector informs the characters of the great things A.F.D.O. are doing for Badestone.

After a few minutes a door opens and elderly man steps in the room wearing a very expensive suit and introduces himself as Kotin's father and a friend to anyone who helped her and the children get off Dashgad.

Once Kotin tells her father of the characters' trouble, Mr. Divin says that he can easily have the ship repaired by A.F.D.O., but for accounting purposes the party will have to perform a simple task for the development office. A.F.D.O. operates a weekly shuttle service between Apge and Badestone; the voyage takes 1.8 days, plus 1 day in port and then 1.8 days back. Each shuttle needs a pilot, copilot, engineer and at least one steward. If the players operate as unpaid crew for such a trip, leaving in two days, then their ship can be repaired.

3. The good ship "Express"

The characters' vessel turns out to be an old style craft using Heplar Drive. It has a contragravity system with accommodation for 14 passengers sharing small staterooms with a passenger lounge, observation room and a small cargo area.

The Express

1. Bridge. A cramped cockpit with two crew seats, though only one is usually used as the pilots take shifts during the flight.

2. Crew Staterooms. Simple rooms containing four bunks (two to a room), a footlocker, a head and a wash basin.

3. Passenger Lounge and Gallery. A large area with an open plan kitchen were the stewards prepare meals and drinks. Only the stewards have the necessary security cards to open or work the kitchen. The rest of the room is filled with three large round tables with five chairs each, where passengers can sit to eat their meals.

4. Passenger Staterooms. Each room has a games console, a shower, a head, two small wardrobes and two beds. All the rooms are identical.

5. Observation Deck. A ladder from the lounge leads to the observation dome, where passengers can view the stars. The furniture is low-set comfortable seats with a lot of neck support to help passengers while away the hours looking out at space.

6. Cargo Bay. Locked during flight, this half-deck is only five feet high and is designed to carry large items for the

passengers, not to ship tons of cargo.

7. Engineering. Sealed off by electronic locks (only the engineer has a key), these areas contain the life support, fuel and Heplar drives. Only the engineer is ever required to be in these areas.

As the flight crew readies the *Express* for the journey and the ground crew finishes loading supplies, fuel and the passenger's luggage, the stewards welcome the passengers:

Sir Delaunch. An imperial knight in his late thirties. Delaunch is very athletic and constantly wears a Naval uniform marked with the rank of Commander. Delaunch is part of the Imperial Embassy and is visiting the Ancients site as part of an Imperial/Apge scientific exchange.

John Dalin. An Imperial Scout, Dalin is a squat, chubby man who always appears to be sweating and always has the remains of his last meal down the front of his Scout Service coverall. Dalin is also part of the Imperial/Apge scientific exchange program.

Joella Lodrada. Joella is an attractive young woman with a very wide smile backed up with the sort of perfect that teeth only money can buy. She is a singer journeying to the Badestone base on a contract. She has the habit of never stopping talking or telling long and unfunny jokes.

Captain Ian "Bonebreaker" Tabbit. A Captain in the Apge Protection force, Bonebreaker is famous in the consortium as a problem solver. He has often been accused of going beyond the law to win success for the consortium. Ian is a large man as wide as he is tall (and solid, not fat), with a mass of sandy blond hair cut far too long for a military man.

4. Murder on the Badestone Express

Of course, the trip won't be a piece of cake. The following section deals with the death of one of the passengers, which will leave the characters with a murder to solve before they arrive at the police state of Badestone. As the strangers in the group, the crewmen are certain to be prime suspects, and the last thing they should want is to be subjected to Badestone "justice."

Sir Delaunch is on board to make sure that the Archon Hypothesis continues to gain support as the Emperor wishes. An agent of the Bureau for Interstellar Affairs, he is here to kill Dalin so that he can't continue to research his non-Archon thesis concerning the ancients.

Bonebreaker has, in medical terms, a "screw loose," and now sees anti-Apge plots everywhere and believes everyone is out to get him. The murder will of course (in his imagination) be a misjudged attempt to kill him and he will take the appropriate action to save himself.

Lodrada is what she seems -- a good singer and an innocent caught on the murder express.

Delaunch is very good at his job and will kill Dalin as smoothly as he can, placing an oxidizer in Dalin's life support mask and then creating a failure in life support so Dalin will place the mask on, causing death by suffocation.

Guests Arrive. The passengers are shown to their staterooms and told that lunch will be served at 1300 hours. The stewards should get an initial feel about each passenger during this time.

Lunch. Lunch is served in the passenger area with all the guests, apart from Bonebreaker, sharing one table. Bonebreaker makes sure he has his back to the wall and simply glares at everyone while his food-probe checks every mouthful of his meal.

The other guests chat amongst themselves, and Dalin begins to explain why the ancients couldn't be human, due to the tool, seat and many other designs discovered at ancient sites. Lodrada says that they must have been human, since she's seen the holo-vids and any way no non-humans could control so many worlds Sir Delaunch simply states that the

Emperor's view is that the Imperium is taking back the worlds of the human Archon Empire.

Dinner (2100 hours). Dinner is only attended by Dalin and Lodrada who keep to themselves. It is clear that Lodrada is not amused by Dalin's strange ideas. Sir Delaunch is busy working on his speech for the A.F.D.O. dinner he must attend on arriving at Badestone. Bonebreaker has decided to eat his own rations in his stateroom, as no one is to be trusted.

A Failure (0100 hours the next day). Everyone is woken by the environmental control alarm, indicating an environmental failure. Everyone must get into their soft-suit vacc suits. Stewards may have to help some of the guests. The Engineer will quickly discover a corrosion fault in the main compressor unit; a fault which the ground crew should have spotted. It will take about 2.5 hours to repair before the ship can be repressurized.

A Death. At 0245 Dalin dies from bleeding in his lungs caused by the oxidizing agent; nothing can save him. He does, however, buzz the stewards before collapsing dead.

An Investigation

Checking out the various leads will yield the following:

Dalin's Soft Suit. A close medical examination of the mask will indicate the presence of a foreign substance.
Engineering. The entry to engineering was hot wired, bypassing the locks. Checking the life support component that the engineer blames for the failure, corrosion damage is, indeed, found. But the damage is very precise . . . almost *too* precise.
Room Search.Delaunch's only error was dropping the top of the acid bottle he used under his bed. He will, of course. claim to have no knowledge of the cap and be offended at the accusation that he could kill his colleague. He will suggest Tabbit as a likely suspect, pointing out (quite rightly) that Captain Tabbit is crazy enough to do anything.

You're Not Getting Me!

At some point in the investigation, Captain Ian "Bonebreaker" Tabbit will lose it completely, descending into a fit of paranoid lunacy. He will begin trying to eliminate everyone he sees as a threat (that is, just plain everyone) and will attempt to escape from the ship. He has no knowledge of electronics and will kidnap a crewman in order for him to work the iris valve locks so he can escape the vessel. Of course, if the iris valve locks are forced the craft will decompress very, very quickly.

Bonebreaker must be stopped and this scene should provide the characters with a good brawl with a mad but very skillful warrior. The scene also gives the characters one very big clue which should solve the entire affair. Ian couldn't have hotwired the engineering door so it had to have been someone else.

Resolution

The adventure should be resolved with Sir Delaunch being accused and held for the murder of John Dalin. Once at Badestone A.F.D.O. security officers will arrest Sir Delaunch. He will claim diplomatic immunity and the Apge authorities will be forced to release him and deport him back to the Imperium. Sir Delaunch will remain at large and, together with his fellow Bureau for Interstellar Affairs agents, may cause the characters a lot of trouble in the future.

If Sir Delaunch is not handed over to the authorities, the entire complement of the *Express* will be arrested and held

over for two weeks. Genetic tests may indicate Delaunch is the guilty party . . . but he has lots of time to pull in his political markers, and there's a good chance one of the PCs may take the fall, leading to more adventures on the Badestone Run . . .

On return to Apge, Mr. Divin has made sure that the characters' craft has been fixed, and the only problem remaining is the locating of a cargo and perhaps a few passengers.

Library Data

The Ancients

Because of genetic evidence that all branches of Humaniti spread from one common stock, it is a commonly-held belief that all humans come from one world and were scattered across the galaxy by a mysterious race. Ruins on multiple worlds across all known space attest to the one-time existence of a race of Ancients.

The Ancients seem to have either destroyed themselves in a huge war, moved away to another area of space or vanished for some other unknown reason.

Archon Hypothesis

Created by the Solomani Second Imperium, the Archon Hypothesis postulates that the Ancients were actually a race of humaniti, referred to as the Archons. The Archons developed vast technology on their home world Terra before their empire was destroyed in a huge war. The minor human races across known space are the descendants of the Archons who were blasted back to a pre-technological existence.

Emperor Cleon has stated that the third Imperium is simply rejoining the Old Archon Empire and it is mankind's fate to reform the great "Archon" Imperium.

Bureau for Interstellar Affairs (BIA)

The BIA is an imperial publicity and information dissemination agency. (Referees: BIA is the Emperor's own intelligence authority organization answering directly to the Emperor.)

Magus Imperius

By Jeremy Davies

Art by Dan Smith

"I shall do marvels, such as have not been done in all the earth, nor in any nation: and all the people among which though art shall see the word of the Lord: for it is a terrible thing that I will do with thee"
-- Exodus 34: 10, Inscribed in glowing script upon a floating stone at the main doors to the Assembly Arena. Templar College of Battle Magic, Azer, Megalos

". . . we are those that have the divine authority to do marvels on Yrth. With the Holy purpose to enforce the will of the Empire and to proclaim the word of the Lord. And terrible things indeed shall be revealed to you in your years between these hallowed walls . . ."
Sir Prior Claudius Antioch Battlemage, Templar Prior of Azer. Excerpt from orientation speech, January 12, 1997.

The existence of magic in a medieval campaign changes many aspects of low TL life. In a world where those with magical aptitude are available for military service, it would certainly revolutionize strategy at all levels. Although this article examines the Imperial Legions of Megalos from ***GURPS Fantasy,*** it can be seen as a template for any medieval standing army in a world where magic is real.

Recruitment

The "scouting" of recruits for the Legions is extremely important. The more mages they recruit, the greater the return from their forces. Any free citizen of Megalos that "spots" a young individual with magical aptitude receives a magus pension, which is a cash payment equal to the amount of aptitude discovered:

MA 1: $100
MA 2: $500
MA 3: $1000

It is only paid upon the individual's successful enlistment. Representatives from the Legion would definitely keep their Mage Sight eyes open at such occasions as festivals and country fairs, constantly on the look out for that elusive MA 3 child before one of the guilds got hold of him . . . The Legions are not an equal-opportunity employer. They do not enlist women or full-blooded non-humans, though there are some half-elves. One of these is a very respected and decorated Mage Commander by the name of Aarleng Fire-eyes of Legion IX. Many Legion officials would like to see talented women used at least as Fasinarus (see below) Magi, but the Templars flat out refuse to have female students at Azer. This naturally pleases the guilds, who don't have to compete for the talented female Mage students.

There is plenty of competition for recruits between the guilds and the Legion. Both groups require the same thing to survive, a steady influx of young, gifted individuals. There is no conscription as such, so the Legion representatives must play on the young person's lust for adventure and conquest, very much like military service does on this planet. The be-all-you-can-be approach. Journeyman guild mages are better paid and have superior benefits, not to mention having to put their lives on the line far less frequently, but the apprenticeships are long and boring. Generally, spells

taught in a guild center around what can be used for commerce, not destruction. What 16-year-old male would prefer to learn cleaning and weather spells when he could be casting fireball and lightning?

Enlistment for normal Legionnaires is in a 4 year pactum. For a Magus Imperius the pact is 8 years minimum. A Magus may extend his pact at any time, the length of which is certainly an issue that is looked at when promotion and additional training is requested. A Magus with a self imposed 30-year pact is looked at more favorably than one on a minimum contract.

Training

The first step after enlistment is to become a Legionnaire. Any mage facing battle conditions would still have to be as tough as a normal soldier, so mages undergo the same basic training as the other troops before moving on to the Academy. There are certainly no special privileges at this time. Jealousy among fellow recruits (and even instructors) make things pretty tough on the young mage at "boot camp." This usually improves the temperament of the finished product so while not actively encouraged, a blind eye is turned to all but the most physically damaging harassment.

Mages frequently return this disdain to their non-magical brothers-in-arms once they are serving in a Legion. The least insulting term used to describe them would be "mundanes," usually said with a tangible note of disdain.

On successful completion of the three months of basic Legion training, the Legionnaire heads to Azer, and the dreaded Templar College of Battle Magic, perhaps the most feared institution in Ytarria. What follows is two years of the most intensive warfare-orientated instruction available in Yrth. An area spell of Azer invention that accelerates and amplifies learning time for the students has been in constant operation since 1650 (see below).

All the magical colleges are represented at Azer, as well as the cutting edge of military magical research and development. The Doctrina is a group of the most experienced Templars and Imperial Magi that are always working on new projects for applying magic to the art of warfare.

After the first six months, the Deans of the College decide which of the three Lines of Magus the recruit will be assigned to:

The *Fasinarus Line* is reserved for the Mages not as suitable for battle conditions, old retirees and those aspected for enchanting. They are the enchanters, workers who produce the power stones, enchanted weaponry and items that keep the Legion marching. Their role is vital -- magical equipment is a huge strategic tool for Legion officials -- but the Battle Mages tend to look down upon their "lesser" comrades. This attitude is not helped by the practice of Battle Mages that fail in combat being reassigned to this Line to remain productive.

The *Magus Imperius Proprius* is the specialist mage. Those with aspected magery will certainly be sent to this Line. The Proprius will learn almost every known spell from one college, but know little of any other excluding prerequisites. Alternatively, he may learn a large number of spells from one spell string (see below).

The *Generalus Line* makes up the greatest percentage of Battle Mages. They will be taught many spells from at least three of the Strings below:

Spell Strings

Elementum (Fire, Water, Air, Earth)
Moderatio (Body, Mind, Movement)

Natura (Animal, Food, Plant)
Sensus (Light and Darkness, Sound, Protection and Warning, Illusion and Creation)
Litterae (Communication and Empathy, Knowledge, Healing)
Making and Breaking spells are mainly taught only to a special group of Proprius mages. They are known as cunicularians or cunicules (see below for more details).
Meta spells are taught to all Mages Generalus. Meta Proprius Mages are used extensively for the purpose of neutralizing enemy magics.
Necromantic spells not approved by the Curia are not taught in the Templar college. Any Legionnaire found dabbling in such arts should expect to meet the purifying flames of the Curia's Holy Inquisition!

Thus, the Legion hierarchy can plan for each Legion to have a well-rounded complement of magical power to draw on.

The training isn't easy, and about one-third of the recruits drop out somewhere along the way. 20% don't make it through basic Legionnaire training; of the remainder, a little over 10% drop out after six months at Azer, with another 18% immediately tabbed for the Fasinarus Line. In the remaining 18 months of specialty training, over 20% of the Generalus and Proprius Line trainees get busted down to Fasinarus, and another small percentage are lost from training accidents, personal problems unrelated to training, etc.

As far as skills training goes, Thaumatology is definitely on the syllabus, as well as all applicable Spell Throwing skills. Tactics and Strategy have high priority, as well as frequent retraining in such basic battle arts learned at Legionnaire induction, including Combat skills, Running, Swimming, Survival etc. Riding (Horse) is also introduced. Most Magus Imperius are given with a mount, unlike mundane Legionnaires.

The Cunicules are a particularly prestigious unit dedicated to the special magic needed in sieges. Although the Legions have non-magical engineers for standard sapper duties, the Cunicules are by far the most feared force of wall breachers in Ytarria. They are trained in both magical and mundane siege warcraft. Skills taught are Engineer/TL3 (Combat Engineering), Engineer/TL3 (Primitive Machines), Mechanic/TL3 (Primitive Machines) and Architecture/TL3. Although they do specialize extensively in the Making and Breaking college, they do learn many appropriate Earth spells.

Ongoing training is of course very important. Legion Mages are entitled to a minimum of one year training every four years of active service. There are also "specialist" courses that are filled according to talent, pact conditions and need. The Imperial Legions benefit from their Mages always learning more and challenging their capabilities, so this professional environment is encouraged.

Organization

Currently, most Megalan Imperial Legions are organized loosely around the same model as a Cohortal Legion of Imperial Rome (see ***GURPS Imperial Rome,*** p. 76). Individual Legion Generals often change their host somewhat to reflect their particular emphasis, or sometimes just because they can. The basics remain mostly the same, however.

There are ten cohorts of approximately 600 Legionnaires in every Legion. What follows is the ideal assignment strength of Mages for a Legion. At any time, a particular Legion may have a much different and unbalanced breakdown. War is hell and casualties have to be balanced somehow . . .

12 Magus Imperius Generalus per Cohort.
At least one Magus Imperius Proprius per Cohort representing each of the Elementum, Moderatio, Natura, Sensus and Litterae strings.
Three Magus Imperius Proprius Meta per cohort.
One unit of 12 Cunicularians.
One unit of 12 Magus Imperius Proprius Meta.

Many generals also have a group of mages as "advisors" that will stay with him in the leadership party. They will

generally include Proprius mages of the Communication college (for sending messages to lieutenants), Sound college for relaying audible messages, Knowledge for scrying the enemy, etc. Most generals have a retinue of around ten mages. The most important of these is the best Knowledge Proprius, who is named the Legions Magus Imperius Cognito. He can be of a low rank and technically subordinant to other Mages, but his word will carry plenty of weight with the Legion's General.

Although many of the mages are assigned to Cohorts, they have their own chain of command:

Rank 0: Magus
Rank 2: Mage Sergeant (commands at Cohort or Unit strength)
Rank 4: Mage Captain (controls half a Legion or the Meta unit)
Rank 6: Mage Commander (all Mages in a Legion, answers only to the General of the Legion)

Uniform for Magus Imperius consists of a robe of a certain color covered in a white sleeveless tabard. The color depends on the Line and college specialty of the Mage:

Fasinarus Line: Dark Blue
Generalus Line: Dark Brown
Proprius Line: depends on string specialty
Elementum: Dark Red
Moderatio: Light Gray
Natura: Light Green
Sensus: Yellow
Litterae: Off-White
Cunicularians: Black
Meta: Deep Purple

Rank is only known by casting the simple but well-guarded Know Rank spell (see below), although the Mage Commander has the right to wear a golden circlet around his head. The Commander does not wear this circlet in battle, obviously -- why present an obvious target?

Strategy and Tactics

The strategic potential of many spells are obvious, while others are far more subtle. Many large spells are cast as a part of a Circle (***GURPS Magic,*** p. 14). If a particularly powerful effect is required, all the Mages of a particular Legion can come together and form one very large Circle, or Gestalt. Concentrating a Legion's entire magical strength in one area is a risky move in warfare however, and is done rarely.

The Doctrina are always working on turning Regular spells into Area effect spells. This obviously makes the spell much more useful on a mass scale. It is up to the individual GM just how many Regular spells he allows access to his players as Area spells. An example is at the end of this article.

What follows are some of the more common strategic uses of some spells from some of the Colleges. There are literally thousands of ways arcane knowledge can be used for mass destruction however.

Animal: The summoning of vermin is a common siege weapon to frustrate and spread disease amongst pesky city defenders. Rider Within is a very useful physical observation tool. A hawk or a small rodent can give a commander some very handy information about enemy positions. Shapeshifting of friendly troops into vicious animals is an expensive and rather cosmetic tactic that has been known to be an effective morale weapon.

Body Control: There are many Body Control spells that have great mass combat potential. Legionnaires sometimes carry items such as amulets of Resist Pain. Rooted Feet, particularly as a Mass spell (see below) is quite nasty.

Communication and Empathy: A vitally important College to the Legions. Compel Truth and Mind Reading are all

very good interrogative spells, as well as Hide Thoughts to avoid the enemy doing the same. Telepathy comes in very handy for battlefield communication (see Equipment below). During the Mages War on the 3rd of April 1925, in the battle of Al-Hayabad plain, a Mage Sergeant of Legion XI managed to take possession of the al-Wazifi commander. This turned the tide of the battle and won the day for the Legion. This tactic has since been known as the Andallus maneuver, after the Mage in question, who now lectures at Azer.

Earth, Air, Fire, Water: Powers of the elements are some of the most drastic and feared on the battlefield. Many Earth spells are used in sieges in conjunction with the Cunicules. Another tactic used during the Mages War was to cast a Delayed Create Fire over an area that was going to be hotly (heh heh) contested, then casting Resist Fire on friendly troops and sending them into the area to meet the enemy.

Food: Uncommonly popular on long forced marches. Legions do not have to carry the same amount of provisions as their Earth equivalents.

Healing Spells: Healing Proprius Mages are obviously a precious commodity. Everything but Resurrection is available (see Necromantic spells below).

Illusion and Creation: Illusions are not very tactically valuable, as armies have become more "magic aware", though morale can be affected. Created warriors are often used to fill gaps in formation lines.

Knowledge: The Legion's Magus Cognito is the information hub of the force, never far from the General and the Mage Commander. Scrying of all sorts are extensively used to gain an edge on the enemy, as are anti-scrying spells. Skill levels in these departments become very important, hence the Cognito position depending far more on ability than rank, social standing etc.

Light and Darkness: Used extensively, particularly Invisibility and See Invisible.

Making and Breaking: The Cunicularians are masters of the use of this College, often combined with the Earth spells. Weaken, Shatter, Explode, Disintegrate and Rive are all obvious wall breachers, when combined with Throw Spell they can even be cast from a protective distance. Walk Through Earth and Earth to Air are also often used.

Meta: Meta spells are taught to all Magus Imperius in their time at Azer, but the Meta Proprius Mages hold great respect. Their main duty is that of anti-Mages, as well as augmenting their own side's attacks. A Spell Shield and Pentagram are cast on any important areas, such as the Legion General's tent, the Powerstone Recharging Rack, etc. as a standard operating procedure. Spell Walls are common at the front line of a battle. Delay, Links, Reflexes and the Azer-invented Hang spells are very tactically-efficient tools for a Mage Commander. Scryfool, another Azer devised spell, is also popular.

The struggle for the control of Mana in a given area is often a war within a war. During the Mages War of 1924-28 the strategic control of Mana was often more sought after than the land itself. The dangers involved in spells such as Drain and Suspend Mana are obvious in the spell descriptions. No mage wants to lose Aptitude for any amount of time. However, No-Mana zones are created on occasions, usually under direct orders from a General.

Mind Control: The Mind Control college has great morale control potential, for both the enemy and the ally. Bravery, Loyalty, Berserker, Charm and even Mass Suggestion have all been used on friendly troops, while Fear, Panic, Terror, Sickness etc are used on hostiles.

Movement: Quick March was devised many years past for the express purpose of increased troop movement. Wallwalker can be especially handy for climbing those ramparts. Teleport Other is probably one of the most effective yet risky spells of this college. To move even a small force into a strategically advantageous position (e.g., within the walls of a besieged city) is dangerous, particularly with a powerful enemy Mage force to deal with. It has been successful in the past, but it has also met with many bloody failures. Still, it would sure beat the only Earth method of storming a mighty fortress . . . up that ladder son . . .

Necromantic: Turn Zombie, Pestilence, Banish, Turn Spirit, Repel Spirits, Astral Block and Rotting Death are the

only Curia approved Necromantic spells available to the Imperial Mage. Resurrection is a gift granted to only three out of 5,679 applications in recorded Megalan history. There has to be a *very* strong case for a person's return to this realm before the Curia will meddle with what the Lord hath taken away. There persists rumors that in the upper ranks of the Magus Imperius, Necromantic spells are used without Curia permission. Summon Shade and Soul Jar in particular . . .

Plant: Plant spells can be very useful in the wilderness. Pollen Clouds are used very successfully on pursuing forces to aid strategic withdrawals.

Protection and Warning: There are many obvious uses in this defensive college. Missile Shield and Reverse Missiles are used extensively. Teleport Shield, Utter and Force domes/walls are all very useful Area spells. Sense Observation is another HQ protective spell used as a matter of course.

Sound: The sounds an army makes can tell the enemy many things. Walls of Silence are often cast when a Legion begins constructing siege engines. Great Voice can be very useful to a General on the battlefield to aid the morale of the common troops. Invisible Wizard Ears have also been used on more than one occasion.

Equipment

The Magus Imperius Fasinarus at Azer and at other well-concealed locations (generally in areas of high/very high mana, or maybe over the top of a mana pool . . .) are continually working on creating magical items for the use of the Empire's armed forces. Everything from powerstones, scrolls and potions to swords, shields and breastplates. Every Legion will have different and maybe even unique items, but as can be expected in the highly organized and structured Legions, there are standard-issue articles.

Powerstones form the backbone of the magical power from which the Legion's mages draw their energy. They are issued as follows:

Each Magus: 10-point stone
Each Mage Sergeant: 15-point stone
Each Mage Captain: 30-point stone
Mage Commander: 50+ (!)-point stone
Cunicularian Sergeant: additional 20-point stone
Meta unit Captain: additional 30-point stone
Legion Cognito: 30-point stone

The Meta unit is in charge of the Powerstone Recharging Rack, which every Legion has. The rack itself (see ***GURPS Magic Items,*** p. 65) allows up to 100 powerstones to be charged, regardless of quirk requirement, at the rate of one level higher than the actual surrounding mana level. The rack is protected only by a wooden case (PD1 DR4) and may have no other spells cast on it. However, at least four mundanes are assigned to protect it with large shields enchanted with the Reverse Missiles spell. Also, the case is set upon a wooden platform that a Meta Proprius Magus controls with a wand enchanted with Apportation, Power 3, Fireball and Force Wall. Apportation has been a very effective spell for transporting the delicate racks. Power 3 makes the 45-lb. device effectively self-powered, while Force Wall can be used to help defend the precious apparatus. Fireball is supplied to destroy the valuable rack as a last resort before the enemy can take possession.

Conch shells enchanted with the Message spell are issued to all ranked officers from the General down to the Captains of each Cohort, including the Mage Commander and Captains.. These shells are all Named and kept as the personal property of the individual officer. They have become unofficial badges of rank for many of the Legion officers and are generally worn hanging from the belt, sometimes elaborately decorated.

Battlefield communication for the mundanes becomes instantaneous under this system. No longer is the medieval general forced to rely on time consuming and injury-prone runners to send an important directive to a far flank of the battle. Signals, flags and colored smoke, are still used to validate orders if the source of the message is at all in question. The Meta Proprius Mages go to great lengths to keep comms secure, but the battle for the hill top of al-

Ashaq in the North of al-Wazif proved the necessity for a validation system to be available. In the fall of 1524 Legion II was crushed by a numerically inferior force due to some magical "hacking" of the Legion communication system.

In addition to this, all mages above rank 0 (including the Cognito) wear thin silver circlets around their heads which are enchanted with Telepathy and Power 1.

Each Mage carries a scroll case on them holding at least 5 scrolls. The spells on the scrolls are issued to them by the Mage Commander as he sees fit. They will generally be of a totally unrelated nature to the particular mage's expertise, adding to his versatility.

Other items are issued on a need basis. Certain tactics are sometimes devised around the use of particular items. The Voluce Ballitors are a group of 30 Templars who utilize a combination of self-powered rings of Flying and helms enchanted with Infravision and Invisibility. This group of medieval drop troops train extensively using the powers of their equipment to their fullest. In 1992 they were instrumental in the conquest of Sa'Azraq.

Mages are encouraged to obtain any artifacts they can that will be of use to the Legions efforts. Some Mage Commander's personal staves are very awesome items indeed! They are of course required to hand over any items of "war booty" to the Mage Commander, but all but the most important of magical artifacts are returned to the mage who captured them as a bonus for outstanding service.

When a mundane is recognized for heroism in battle or any other actions considered above and beyond the call of duty, a magical item appropriate to his position is often given as an award. A worthy soldier may be presented with a fine broadsword with +1 Accuracy, +2 Puissance and Shatterproof. A non-mage sapper may be given a glove with Shatter and Power 1.

The Imperial Legions of the great and terrible Empire of Megalos are the tool that put the Empire where it is today, and the instrument through which the Emperor maintains order throughout his own lands. They are an ever-present threat to the other major nations. The organization of the Magus Imperius, along with the Templars, are at the cutting edge of the research, development and utilization of strategic battle magic. Many centuries-old elf wizards have shaken their heads in wonder at the sheer destructive brilliance of spell use they have observed from Imperial Mages. Certainly humans seem to excel in destructive potential, perhaps the greatest Bane of all the Banestorm brought . . .

. . . The soldiers sword may cut you, the Knights may run you down,
But your soul may be damned And your clan turned to dung,
If the Magi is moved to frown.
The Legion is on the march.
The Legion is on the march.
-- Anonymous 16th-century folk poem

Know Legion Rank Regular

This spell is the first taught at Azer and allows the Mage to know the rank of any other Magus Imperius. It is taught to skill level 15 to reduce its cost to 0.
Duration: 1 second
*Cost:*1

Mass Rooted Feet Area, Resisted by ST

As Rooted Feet (Magic p. 27) on a large area.
Duration: 1 minute
Cost: 4 to cast, 2 to maintain
Time to Cast: 1 second per energy point used
Prerequisite: Rooted Feet, IQ 13, Magery

Enhance Learning Area

A spell devised and jealously protected by the Deans of the Templar College of Battle Magic at Azer. It helps enhance the learning speed of prospective Magus Imperius. The less time they spend learning, the more time they will spend in the field of battle or creating enchanted items. Learning time is doubled for anyone being actively instructed by a teacher within the area effect of the spell, in other words, one hour of study is actually worth two for game purposes.
Duration: Permanent
Cost: 5
Time to Cast: 1 hour
Prerequisite: Magery, Enchant and at least 6 Knowledge spells

by Brent Knowles

The more interesting and detailed a campaign world, the easier it is to write adventures within it. Players enjoy coming away from a campaign and feeling like they've discovered something exciting and new. A volatile social climate in your world will create adventures for your players that will keep them interested.

GM: "You ride over the hill and into Hammuri, seat of power for the Duchy of Thovescore. There is a big castle beyond a sprawling city."
BIG DURIK: "Ok I ride into town and find an smith who'll fix my plate-mail."
MARVIN: "I'll go to the mage-shop and buy some reagents."
COLLIN: "Me and Mic will ride up to the castle and talk to the King. See if there are any adventures to be had. Maybe his daughter has been kidnapped or something."

Imagine that this is a new country that the party has never visited before. Notice their assumption that everything should run as they expect it to. Many times in the haste of writing an adventure, the GM glosses over the background and the players become used to this. This is to the disadvantage of both the players and the GM. With a little setup and imagination, the players will find that the discovery of new kingdoms is an adventure in itself.

Work Before the Campaign Begins

Spending time before the adventure begins is essential to managing a well-balanced campaign world. At the very least have maps of every location the players may journey to during the adventure. These will allow you to focus on your world as a whole, in case you need to make things up as you go. Preparing random encounter and unexpected event charts also saves time.

No matter how well prepared you are however, your players will do something impulsive. You expect them to follow the slaver's trail from the great city of Junction to the province of Lundvin, by way of the Empress' Highway. However, they decide to cross over the great Northern Mountains and take a shortcut. The adventure material you'd originally developed is not easily modified. To counter this, you need some material that has connections to nothing else. It has to be a stand-alone adventure. This form of module sits outside of your campaign world and can be dropped virtually anywhere that you need it.

For the previous example, you may have a stand alone cavern exploration adventure. With a few tweaks, a secret tunnel now crosses underneath the Northern Mountains. There are numerous commercial products available such as sourcebooks and modules that help the GM prepare in advance. Also, on the Internet there are web-sites with modules, maps, and encounter tables designed by other players.

Thrill of the Unexpected

Discovery should play an essential role in a campaign. The discovery of new civilizations, creatures, and artifacts adds

to the pleasure of game play. If players find themselves anticipating what will come next, they will increase their game participation.

When every civilization in your campaign world is based on the traditional medieval stereotype, your party will have little to gain by traveling to new lands. However, by populating your campaign world with a variety of cultures you will keep the players guessing and role-playing.

This is not as hard to do as it might appear. National Geographic magazines are useful in designing new civilizations. Borrow customs, religions, and recreational activities from several cultures and blend them together to create your own unique kingdoms. If you are of a different cultural background than your players, or you have a special interest in another culture, impress your players with your knowledge. Most of them will appreciate learning a little about a society other than their own. With even a few of these homebrew countries at your disposal, writing adventures for your players will be a breeze. In fact, you will likely find that the adventures will almost write themselves.

Why not cross the boundaries of time as well? Make technology progress at your will. Imagine a tribal community that has discovered the arts of advanced navigation, in the political context of communism. Perhaps they are a communal society of water-borne wanderers. A new society is born.

Borrow from legends not often used in traditional campaigns. A quick glance through mythology texts is a ready spur to the imagination in terms of creature creation. Drop these creatures into your world, cover them with the cloth of superstition, and immerse your players in a world of discovery.

Society

Most GM's use society as simply a backdrop to their campaign. What they seldom realize is that society is the catalyst for much of what occurs in the real world. Using this knowledge to build your campaign world not only makes for a more realistic world, but also a more interesting one.

A simple example illustrates one such use. Imagine a country ruled by a lunatic and his army of henchmen. The players form a revolution and eventually overthrow the dictatorship. This is where most adventures would stop. In the real world, however there are side effects to this good deed.

If any of the henchmen survive, they will resent losing their special status within the country. Many of them will become bandits or try to place themselves into positions of power within the new government. Nobles who may have thrived under the old regime will be angered at all the fairness and equality. By weaving deceptions, they could change the population's feelings toward the party.

The nobles spread tales of how great the old leadership of the dictator had been, concentrating on the positive aspects and ignoring the negative. Terrible stories could be fermented about the true nature of the party, and their real reasons for overthrowing the old government. The population may splinter into several factions each with their own perception of reality. For the party, the adventure may not be in the overthrowing of evil, but in building the foundations of good.

Most people in a society are comfortable with simply being left alone in life. They want to be able to feed their families and live in peace. Politicians often use these needs in the real world, and in your campaign, they can serve the same purpose. The majority of the population always drowns the voices of a few dissenters. If convinced that the party is evil and threatening their families, even a peaceful farmer can be persuaded to fight for the wrong side.

Remembering that kingdom leaders, whether they be a sole King or Queen, or a council of citizens working together, are subject to the same emotions as others, goes a long ways in making them run their countries believably. A long-standing alliance between two nations may become jeopardized when one King accidentally offends the other. A head of religion in one nation may become angered when a neighboring country protects a disliked prophet. These emotions will manifest themselves as actions that drive the country towards ends that further the ruler's own motives and ambitions. Understanding your rulers is key.

Still a kingdom may have a strong history separate from whoever rules it. The people carry an inherent pride for their land. Occasionally this national pride can give rise to political dissent and even rebellion. In this case, it is a good idea to create a few character sheets detailing characters that oppose the current system of government. Each country should ideally have a few of these figures, who are capable of raising the population to arms if the ruler does something ridiculous.

A way to keep track of these forces is to draw a horizontal graph for each kingdom. Use a couple colors; say blue for the Queen, and red for the Freedom Party and highlight the graph. Place a pencil mark within the scale that is strongest. For example, if support for the Queen is very strong then place a mark on the scale at the end farthest away from the red color. However if the Queen announces a harsh conscription policy then maybe move the dot closer to the red scale, representing the fact that the Queen's power is waning and the Freedom Party's is rising. If she announces that all people must give up their worldly possessions, it might throw the people's favor completely within the Freedom Party's area of the scale. This represents that the people of the country are now strongly backing the motives of the Freedom Party.

Magic Creates Its Own Rules

Never underestimate the value of magic when building a campaign world. In a country ruled by wizards, all the normal rules of society are changed. Fearing the arrival of a technological society, a sorcerer outlaws the use of certain tools. Her people may never leave the Stone Age. Yet, the sorcerer's power protects her people from hostile and more technologically advanced kingdoms.

Magic can also be used to encourage technological research. With the aids of divining magic, mages may spy on neighboring countries and steal their research. A powerful priest may speak with his god and learn valuable secrets that can help the people of the kingdom flourish.

The World is not Static

Your campaign world should never become an unchanging behemoth. As in the real world, the fantasy world should change as times passes. Some kingdoms are crushed, others suffer famines, and some claim unexplored lands. Queens and Emperor's may redraw their country boundaries on a daily basis. What harms one country on one side of the globe may benefit another kingdom on the opposite side.

The governments of the world do not exist as isolated entities. They are interlocked and constantly in a stage of opposition, whether at the diplomatic or the military level. Representing these events, even if only as background gossip, creates the feeling of a realistic world for the players. They may even find themselves becoming concerned. In this way, spur of the moment adventures may form.

Campaign Suggestions

There is no need to know every detail about every country in your world before you begin play. Concentrate on the main areas where you want the characters to visit first. The rest can be developed as the campaign progresses, of if need be, on the fly as you are playing. If you know the forms of government, the major leaders, and the current mood of the populace for every country than you have enough information to begin. Here are some ideas to encourage your campaign creation.

1. A faction of a larger kingdom demands special considerations and/or their own rule (the faction could be a geographic area, a race, or a religion).
2. A country in which slavery is legal becomes divided when some factions want the slave trade abolished.
3. A certain border territory is constantly being annexed by one kingdom or another, resulting in a war-torn boundary land.
4. A neighbor is secretly removing valuable resources from another kingdom.

Designing realistic, interesting campaign worlds is an easy undertaking. The real world is full of history and current events, all of which can be used in the creation of your campaign. Spend an afternoon watching the news, or reading a newspaper and take notes. The probability is high that if something interests you, then it will likely interest your players too. You will find yourself with a campaign world that is different from any other, as well as being a rewarding environment for your players to adventure.

Gene Weavers

By T. Carter Ross

GURPS offers a wide array of shapeshifting options, but the Shapeshift spells detailed in ***GURPS Magic*** and ***GURPS Grimoire*** are limited to transmorphing humans and demihumans into various animal forms.

Even Merging Shapeshift (p. G12) and Great Shapeshift (p. G12) significantly limit the modifications wizards can make to their own or other's bodies.

To create a truly wondrous creature with magic -- a human adapted to subaquatic life or a bear that can wield a sword -- requires something greater than Shapeshifting.

Gene weaving, the magical manipulation of DNA, makes possible everything from existing shapeshifting spells to magical cloning and the magical equivalent of nanotech genetic surgery.

GURPS Bio-Tech outlines the possibilities for wholesale genetic modification via nanotech viruses, such as the Proteus Nanovirus (p. BIO77) and the Metamorphosis Virus (p. BIO79). These viruses -- along with the rules for genetically engineered animals (p. BIO98-105) -- provide the basis for the Gene College of magic and the gene weaving process.

Gene weaving is not for dabblers. It requires Magery, as well as much time and energy. Unusual physical components should be required. The changes wrought by gene weaving are permanent unless reversed by another gene weaver or a Great Wish (p. M44).

Gene weaving can be added to a campaign as a standalone college, a la Tech Magic, or its spells could be divided among the Body Control, Animal, Enchantment and Healing Colleges.

If treated as a stand-alone college, the Gene College should be divided into five sub-colleges:

- Sub-College of Cloning & Growing: Create Chimera (PY29/43), Doppleganger (p. G40), Homunculus (p. G42), Simulacrum (p. G39), and Strike Barren (p. G14).
- Sub-College of Gene Weaving: Adapt Breathing, Adapt Skin, Affix New Limb, Musculate, Pheromones, Reform Limb, Reform Skeleton, Resequence, Sculpt Flesh, and Seek Genome.
- Sub-College of Genetic Healing: Boost Drug, Cure Addiction (p. G55), Cure Radiation (p. G105), Dominant Gene, Dwindle Tumor, Halt Aging (p. M51), Metastasize, Relieve Addiction (p. G54), and Youth (p. M51).
- Shaping & Forming: Great Shapeshift (p. G12), Merging Shapeshift (p. G12), Partial Shapeshift (p. G11), Permanent Shapeshift (p. G12), Plant Form (p. M46), Plant Form Other (p. G90), Shapeshift (p. M25), and Shapeshift Other (p. M25).
- Sub-College of Uplifting: Awaken Self-Knowledge, The Brain!, and Uplift.

Alter Body (p. M28), Enchant (p. M42), Golem (p. M44), and Lengthen Limb (p. G18) are closely associated with the college and are prerequisites for several Gene College spells.

At higher Tech Levels (TL6+), Genetics, Surgery, Biochemistry, or other science skills can be prerequisites for successful gene weaving, at GM discretion, and such skills may add a bonus to casting these spells. Additional spell prerequisites or unusual physical components may be required for some modifications, after all, the new genetic material must come from somewhere.

Two of these spells -- Resequence and Seek Genome -- are similar to Manipulate DNA (PY29/43) and Sequence DNA (PY29/44) from ***Bio-Tech*** *Designer's Notes,* however where Manipulate DNA and Sequence DNA provide bonuses to

the use of Genetics (Genetic Engineering) skill rolls, Resequence and Seek Genome direct the flow of magical energy to effect the genetic change. This allows for more immediate results than are achievable with traditional genetic engineering; changes can be made to adult individuals instead of to the next generation.

Gene weaving spells allow the caster to add at least one advantage (Amphibious, Pressure Support, Fur, Winged Flight, etc.) to the subject. Just like the Metamorphosis Virus, each advantage added requires one mage day to complete the transformation. The process also requires at least an hour of prep time for the caster to determine which traits must be adapted.

For example, a chimpanzee could be adapted to live in space by adding +2 ST, +1 HT, Vacuum Support and Wings. Since the Vacuum Support advantage (p. CI70) encompasses Doesn't Breathe and three levels of Pressure Support, a total of eight advantages are being added. Preparatory spells and cosmetic changes will add another half day to the process. The total time to modify the chimp would take some 68 mage hours, or about eight-and-a-half mage days.

During that time, the mage would need to cast Seek Genome at least six times to determine which genes control ST, HT, pressure support, breathing, and wing development; Resequence once, but maintain it for the entire project; Affix New Limb for one day; Musculate for one day; Reform Skeleton for two days; Adapt Skin for three days; and Adapt Breathing for one day. Total energy cost for the modifications would be 1,952. At nearly 30 points per hour, creating this biomorph within eight-and-a-half days would take five skilled gene weavers working together and drawing heavily upon powerstones or some other power source.

Weeks would be added to the time if modifications to the intelligence or self-awareness of the chimp were made.

If need be, a wizard could extend the time for the transformation, reducing the daily power consumption, but adding other risks. If the biomorphing process takes longer than the sum of the subject's HT and the base number of days, a roll vs. HT is required each extra day to avoid unintended mutations.

Because of the time needed to reweave the genetic code, a sentient being genetically modified must be either completely willing or completely subdued. Beware, some magical means of subduing a subject, such as Suspend Animation (p. M50) slow bodily processes and will hinder gene weaving.

Similarly, gene weaving cannot work on undead creatures. Magical energy may keep these beings ambulatory, but cellular and genetic activity are dead.

The energy costs for gene weaving may seem steep, but these changes are enchantments, and permanent modifications are being made to the subject's body. In effect, the biomorphs created by gene weaving are magic items.

These new creatures will have a magical aura, unless it is masked with Conceal Magic (p. M61), Scryguard (p. M61), or a similar spell. However, Know True Shape (p. G58) would not reveal anything about the nature of the biomorph: Its magically augmented shape *is* its true shape.

As magical constructs, gene woven biomorphs may be affected by different levels of mana.

If a gene woven individual enters a no-mana zone, it is up to the GM as to what happens (***GURPS Fantasy Folk,*** *2nd Edition,* p. 13). However, it is suggested that gene woven characters be unaffected by a lack of mana. The changes are physical despite being the result of magic.

Above normal mana levels, however, may cause magically augmented genes to mutate. The effects should be slow, but noticeable. Perhaps the genetic modifications slowly unweave, or new, stranger mutations may occur. A human genetically modified with fish DNA to breathe water, for example, might begin to transform into a fish or a Fishman (p. FF70). Or she could contract The Innsmouth Look (***GURPS CthulhuPunk,*** p. 48).

Although these spells are not Tech Level-dependent per se, the current state of medical knowledge in a campaign should affect how gene weaving is implemented. In a ***GURPS Fantasy*** campaign, for example, a mage may be manipulating DNA, but, as far as he knows, he is balancing the four humours. This could lead to some unusual or less-than-effective genetic changes.

Crossovers

Gene weavers -- or at least the results of their magic -- can find a home in any type of campaign, although they are especially well suited to hybrid magic/cyberpunk campaigns.

In a ***Fantasy*** campaign, magi could use gene weaving to create servants and guards, a la the Wicked Witch of the West and her Winged Monkeys in *The Wizard of Oz*. Or humans might use gene weaving to better live in different environments, such as underwater.

Similarly, a space campaign with magical elements could replace technology-based genetic manipulation with magic. Or the two could be in competition.

In a magepunk world like David L. Pulver's Merlin from ***GURPS Time Travel Adventures***, a megacorp like Manadynamics could use gene weaving to help the U.S. government overpower Soviet necromancers.

In Merlin, Manadynamics gene-woven biomorphs could live alongside natural Chimeras, metal or plastic golems, and magically powered computers and cars. Go-Limbs (pp. MIT69-70) might be available for use as magical prosthetics.

In a World of Darkness-based game, where would gene weavers fall in the order of things? Could their spells be used to push the agenda of the Technomancy or would it undercut them the same way the Virtual Adepts have? One word: ***CthulhuPunk***.

GURPS Horror, particularly ***GURPS Atomic Horror***, crossovers could be run with magic taking the place of science run amok.

Although the gene weaving process is difficult to undo, some ***GURPS Espionage*** agencies might use such magic to help place agents far behind enemy lines, particularly in a ***GURPS Space*** or ***Fantasy*** campaign where multiple races would be encountered.

Finally, what would the ***Illuminati*** or ***Warehouse 23*** do for or with this sort of magic?

Ozian Winged Monkeys

ST: 16	**Move/Dodge:** 5#/7	**Size:** 1
DX: 13	**PD/DR:** 1/1	**Weight:** 160 lbs.
IQ: 6	**Damage:** *	**Origin:** SF
HT: 15	**Reach:** C	**Habitat:** -

Component Spells: Affix New Limb (x2), Enslave, Musculate, Reform Skeleton, Resequence (maintain for 6 days), Sculpt Flesh, and Seek Genome (x3).

Modifications made: HT +1, DX -1, wings, heavier fur, claws, and prehensile tail.

Created by the Wicked Witch of the West as loyal servants, these flying monkeys appear to be a hideous mixture of a raven, a bat and a monkey. Bat-like wings sprout from their shoulder blades, allowing the monkeys to fly with an aerial move of 14, and their bodies are covered with shaggy fur that provides DR +1 and PD +1.

Unlike the chimps from which they were grown, the Ozian Winged Monkey has a prehensile tail that can be used to grasp items, but not to attack. The monkeys have claws that do 1d+1 crushing damage. Like normal chimpanzees, they may bite for 1d of cutting damage.

Ozian Winged Monkeys are controlled by the Wicked Witch of the West via an Enslave spell (p. M68), allowing her to see what the monkeys see and to direct them mentally.

Given their hideous appearance, and the fact that they usually swarm in large packs, a fright check must be made upon first spotting Ozian Winged Monkeys.

As a biomorph racial package, Ozian Winged Monkeys cost 88 points:

ST +6 (80 points), DX +3 (30 points), IQ -4 (-30 points), HT +5 (60 points).

Racial Advantages: Prehensile Tail (5 points), Claws (15 points), Sharp Teeth (5 points), Thick Hide (28 points), Winged Flight (30 points).

Racial Disadvantages: Appearance: Horrific (-30 points), Presentient (-20 points), Semi-Upright (-5 points), four levels of Short Lifespan (-40 points), Slave Mentality (-40 points).

Stress Atavism is not included as a disadvantage because of the Enslave spell, however Stress Atavism could be used to buy off some of the Slave Mentality if the spell is broken.

Base stats are drawn from those for Chimpanzees in the ***GURPS Bestiary*** (p. BE11).

These figures are based on the movie version of the Winged Monkeys. In the *Oz* books, the winged monkeys are less fearsome, have the racial quirk Mischievous, and are controlled via an Oath spell (p. G77) cast with the Golden Cap.

It Thinks Therefore It Is, Right?

The Sub-College of Uplifting can lead to some interesting legal situations for PCs.

If a wizard magically uplifts a cat to full sentience, what levels of legal protection would the cat have? What about in a setting like ***GURPS Humanx*** or ***GURPS Uplift,*** where genetically engineered sentient animals are commonplace? What about in a mythic or fantasy world where "normal" animals may talk?

In all likelihood, uplifting would be highly regulated and controlled by megacorps, the church, the military, the Illuminati, and/or the government, depending upon the campaign.

Another problem facing magical uplifting is the creation of a viable new sentient species, as opposed to just a sentient individual. It is safe to assume that too much genetic dabbling will lead to sterility or at least to the inability to breed with non-uplifted members of the source species. If a magician wants to create a race of hominoid felines, a large enough number of cats would need to be uplifted simultaneously to ensure that the same modifications track across all the individuals. This will increase the cost of each spell proportionally.

To help increase the chances for species survival, Dominant Gene or other spells might be used to reduce the chances of environmental mutation or birth defects, and magical changes to the reproductive system -- Accelerate Pregnancy or perhaps with a reversed form of Strike Barren -- might be made to increase fecundity or to extend fertility. Reproductive modifications are discussed in ***Bio-Tech*** on pp. BIO47-49.

Finally, just like their scientifically created cousins, magically uplifted animals are subject to Stress Atavism (p.

CI105).

Critical failures and/or successes in the Uplifting sub-college can have dangerous results. A critical failure could swap the minds of the caster and the subject or summon a demon to posses the subject. A critical success could create a superintelligent creature, one smart enough to play dumb whenever anyone is watching, biding time, until its newfound psionic powers . . .

New Gene College Spells

Adapt Breathing (VH) Special

Can adapt subject to breath water, methane, thin air, vacuum or other atmospheres. The spell can reform the lungs so that they can extract oxygen from water or thin atmospheres, or it can adapt the circulatory, lymphatic and respiratory systems so that they can operate on some substance other than oxygen.
Duration: Permanent
Cost: 225
Time to Cast: at least 1 day
Prerequisites: Magery 3, Adapt Skin, Reform Skeleton

Adapt Skin (VH) Special

Allows the caster to change the skin of a subject. Fur or scales can be added or removed to change DR. Pressure Support can be added for life undersea or in space. Chlorophyll could be added to decrease life support needs.
Duration: Permanent
Cost: 225
Time to Cast: at least 1 day
Prerequisites: Magery 3, Sculpt Flesh

Affix New Limb (VH) Special

Allows the caster to add new appendages to a subject. Wings can be added to the shoulder blades or a prehensile tail could be added to a human, for example.
Duration: Permanent
Cost: 225
Time to Cast: at least 1 day
Prerequisites: Magery 3, Musculate

Awaken Self-Knowledge (VH) Special

Awaken Self-Knowledge is the next step in the chain of uplift, sparking full self-awareness in presentient beings. The subject must have an IQ of at least 8. Creatures raised to full sentience will be thinking creatures, but unless they are modified to handle tools or express language, communication and tool usage are not assured.
Duration: Permanent
Cost: 1,000
Time to Cast: at least 1 week
Prerequisites: Magery 3, Uplift

Boost Drug/TL Regular

This spell is cast on the intended recipient of a drug. The next drug administered to the subject will have its effect doubled in some way. This might be duration, damage done (or relived), two HT rolls for Revive, etc. Multiple castings have no extra effect, and only one aspect is doubled.

The definition of "drug" is left to the GM, but all pharmaceuticals in ***Cyberpunk***, ***Space***, ***Ultra-Tech***, ***Ultra-Tech 2***, and ***Bio-Tech*** count, as do alcohol and other addictive substances. Additional castings on the same subject suffer penalties in the same manner as Minor Healing.
Duration: The drug must be administered within 20 seconds.
Cost: 4
Time to Cast: 3 seconds
Prerequisites: Magery, 3 each Healing and Body Control spells

Item: A hypo or pneumospray hypo could be enchanted to deliver double-doses at all times for 4,500 energy.

Boost Drug was designed by S. John Ross and appeared previously in "Spells from the Galactic Guild," *White Wolf Magazine* #34. The article also is available on-line at http://www.io.com/~caroth/SJohn/Spaceage.htm

Dominant Gene (VH) Regular; Resisted by HT

This spell allows the mage to tweak a single recessive trait, making it dominant. For example, the dominance pattern for eye color could be switched in an individual so that her descendants always have green eyes. The downside is that selecting a gene for dominance could stifle natural mutation and evolution of that trait among a population.
Duration: Permanent
Cost: 5
Time to Cast: 30 seconds
Prerequisites: Magery 2, Resequence

Dwindle Tumor (VH) Regular

The opposite of Metastasize, Dwindle Tumor will cure magical or mundane forms of cancer. If the cancer is the result of radiation exposure (p. S77 or p. G103-104), the spell does not reduce the number of permanent rads in the subject's body (c.f. Cure Radiation, p. G105), but it will halt any suffering from radiation sickness until the next exposure.
Duration: Permanent
Cost: 12
Time to Cast: 1 minute
Prerequisites: Magery 2, Resequence, Major Healing

Item: Staff or Wand. Energy cost to create: 1,600. Usable only by a mage.

Metastasize (VH) Regular; Resisted by HT

The only attack spell in the Gene College, Metastasize trips potentially cancerous genes causing them to begin to mutate and spread.

If a person has cancer at the time of the attack, the rapid growth of cancerous cells will cause 1d damage within 10 minutes and cause the subject to feel sick and nauseated, as per Sickness (p. M66). Another die of damage will be taken and 1 point of HT will be lost each week, until the subject dies or is healed.

In a person without cancer, Metastasize will spark the disease with symptoms appearing 2d months after the attack. Once symptoms appear, the subject will suffer the weekly damage and HT loss, as well as the sickness described above.

Metastasize can be countered/dispelled by Dwindle Tumor, Wish (p. M43) or a combination of Major Healing (p. M50) and Cure Disease (p. M50). Relieve Sickness (p. G54) will cure the symptoms, but the weekly HT loss and damage will continue. Suspended Animation (p. M50) or TL9+ cryonics (pp. BIO113-115) can suspend the weekly damage and HT temporarily.
Duration: Permanent

Cost: 6
Time to Cast: 30 seconds
Prerequisites: Magery 2, Resequence

Item: Staff or Wand. Energy cost to create: 1,000. Usable only by a mage.

Musculate (VH) Special

Allows the gene weaver to modify muscle structures to manipulate new/additional limbs or to boost ST or DX.
Duration: Permanent
Cost: 225
Time to Cast: at least 1 day
Prerequisites: Magery 3, Reform Skeleton

Pheromones (VH) Special

Adds scent emitters and receptors to the subject's skin, as per Pheromone Modification (p. BIO37). These pheromones may be tuned to specific species, as per TL10 Dominance Pheromones (p. BIO37), or they could be used as a form of Secret Communication (p. CI65).
Duration: Permanent
Cost: 225
Time to Cast: at least 1 day
Prerequisites: Magery 3, Adapt Skin

Item: Jacket or Cloak. Energy cost to create: 1,250. If scent-based, cost is 1,000.

Reform Skeleton (VH) Special

Allows the gene weaver to modify a skeleton to support new/additional limbs or to boost ST, HT and/or encumbrance.
Duration: Permanent
Cost: 225
Time to Cast: at least 1 day
Prerequisites: Magery 3, Sculpt Flesh

Reform Limb (VH) Special

Regrows the subject's limbs in a new form. Legs, for example, can be replaced by a Merfolk's tail. Arms can be replaced by wings. A lost limb can be regrown.
Duration: Permanent
Cost: 225
Time to Cast: at least 1 day
Prerequisites: Magery 3, Sculpt Flesh, Lengthen Limb

Resequence (VH) Regular

Guides the gene weaver in restructuring the genetic code. Resequence must be continued continuously during a genetic modification.
Duration: 1 day. One try per day.
Cost: 5 to cast; 5 to continue
Time to Cast: 10 minutes
Prerequisites: Magery 2, Seek Genome, Alter Body

Sculpt Flesh (VH) Special

Allows the caster to make simple, cosmetic modifications to a subject, such as changing hair color or adding pointy ears or webbing between fingers. Generally, these modification will have little or no game effect, although it could be used to change eyelids into Nictating Membranes (p. CI62).
Duration: Permanent
Cost: 116
Time to Cast: at least 4 hours
Prerequisites: Magery 2, Enchantment, Merging Shapeshift, Resequence

Seek Genome Information

Helps the caster determine which genes must be adapted to ensure successful gene modification. It must be recast for each advantage being added.
Duration: 1 hour.
Cost: 2 to cast; 1 to maintain
Time to Cast: 1 minute
Prerequisite: Magery 1

Item: An automedic, diagnosis table or medscanner (p. UT94). Energy cost to create: 1,000. Usable only by a mage.

The Brain! (VH) Special

The Brain! allows a caster to boost the IQ of a subject by 1 point. Success in casting depends upon the base intelligence of the subject, as does the energy cost of the spell (see chart). Normal Magery bonuses do not apply to The Brain!, and it cannot raise IQ above 15.

Base IQ	Modifier	Cost
1	0	500
2-3	-1	600
4-5	-2	750
6-7	-3	900
8-9	-4	1,150
10	-5	1,300
11	-6	1,600
12	-7	1,900
13	-8	2,200
14	-9	2,500

As a creature's IQ is boosted, its physical body may need to be reshaped with other Gene College spells to take advantage of increased brain capacity. Uplift can be used with The Brain! to raise a creature to Presentience (p. CI103).

At GM option, a critical success with The Brain! (or a variant version of the spell) could spark latent psionic powers (p. P86) in a subject whose IQ is greater than 12.
Duration: Permanent
Cost: see chart
Time to Cast: at least 1 week
Prerequisites: Magery 3, Resequence, 8 each Gene and Information spells.

Uplift (VH) Special

Uplift can spark a limited degree of self-awareness in creatures with an IQ of at least 5. Creatures affected by Uplift become Presentient (p. CI103) and can be uplifted gradually to full sentience. For more information on the uplifting process, see ***Uplift***, pp. U60-77, or the Engineered Animals section of ***Bio-Tech***, pp. BIO98-105.
Duration: Permanent
Cost: 500
Time to Cast: at least 1 week
Prerequisites: Magery 3, The Brain!

Secret Santa Man

by Chad Underkoffler

"Besides, to believe in Santa Claus is to believe in magic. The belief in magic in many respects is a pernicious thing. Because of it you've got countless multitudes thinking that aliens abduct people, that Elvis is alive, that you can earn big money stuffing envelopes in your home, and that the TV preacher can cure you if you send him 50 bucks.
-- Cecil Adams, The Straight Dope

"Virginia, your little friends are wrong. They have been affected by the scepticism of a sceptical age. They do not believe except that they see. They think that nothing can be which is not comprehensible by their little minds."
-- Francis P. Church, "Yes, Virginia, There is a Santa Claus," Editorial Page, New York Sun, 1897

A surprising number of role-playing games, whether they incorporate pervasive magic, alien visitors, world- and history-spanning conspiracies, monsters from beyond the grave, ultra technology, the Great Old Ones, or even giant robots, neglect one of the most popular and enduring legends of the world: Santa Claus.

Why? Is Santa Claus just a children's tale? Where did he come from? Who -- or what -- is he?

". . . St. Nicholas was tireless and took strong measures: among other temples he destroyed was that of Artemis, the principal in the district, and the evil spirits fled howling before him. He was the guardian of his people as well in temporal affairs. The governor Eustathius had taken a bribe to condemn to death three innocent men. At the time fixed for their execution Nicholas came to the place, stayed the hands of the executioner, and released the prisoners. Then he turned to Eustathius and did not cease to reproach him until he admitted his crime and expressed his penitence."
-- *Catholic Online*

Saint Nicholas of Myra (in Lycia, in Asia Minor) is one of the most popular saints in the world: he is the guardian saint of Russia, Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Norway, and Greece; he is the patron saint of children, virgins, young brides, unmarried women, pawnbrokers, pirates, thieves, brewers, pilgrims, fishermen, barrelmakers, dyers, butchers, meatpackers, and haberdashers; and there are more churches dedicated to St. Nicholas than any of the Apostles. That's a pretty popular guy.

He was Bishop of Myra in the 4th century AD. The Greek histories of his life agree that he suffered imprisonment for the faith and made a glorious confession in the latter part of the persecution raised by Diocletian, and that he was present at the Council of Nicea, and there condemned Arianism. Well, "condemn" may be too gentle a word:

A heresy called Arianism was gaining currency. It was named for Arius, an Egyptian priest who taught that Christ was godlike, but not quite God -- "God Lite," as Michel Rene Barnes tells his classes on early Christianity at Marquette University. To settle this and other nettlesome issues of the day, the emperor Constantine called the Council of Nicea, at which Arius was branded a heretic and the Son was affirmed as having the same divine nature as the Father.
The council raged for days. Legend has it that Nicholas became so angry during the debate that he let fly a roundhouse punch to the jaw of Arius.
-- "Evolution of Santa dates to 4th Century," USA Today (Life, December 23rd,1997)

One of the primary legends of St. Nicholas is that one day he passed by an open window and overheard a man telling his three daughters that he must sell them into prostitution, since he did not have the money for their dowries. St. Nicholas crept back later that night -- and on two successive nights -- to

chuck a bag of gold through the window. Thus all three daughters gained dowries. (In some versions, a bag of gold landed in a stocking hung up by the fire to dry, but this is probably a later addition to the story.) Because of this generosity, St. Nicholas became the patron of young brides, unmarried women, and pawnbrokers -- because he provided financial aid when it was needed most. In fact, the three golden balls that hang outside of a pawnbroker's shop are St. Nicholas' three bags of gold.

Interestingly, a second legend grew up around these balls in the Middle Ages: somehow, they became not bags of gold, but human heads. The story goes that St. Nicholas stopped at an inn during a famine, and was served meat. Intrigued by the presence of meat during a famine, the Saint explored the basement, only to find the pickled bodies of three young boys floating in a barrel. He restored them to life and helped them to escape from the innkeeper's clutches.

Known as the patron saint of children, parents would give their children gifts upon his feast day, December 6th. This tradition was especially popular in Holland. Tall, gaunt, with a straight beard and wearing a bishop's mitre and robes, St. Nicholas rode his donkey (later, a white horse) from house to house. Children would leave out their left shoes filled with straw -- for the donkey -- and wake in the morning to find the shoes filled with goodies. This offering of straw eventually became the leaving out of sweets or food for the Saint himself. The parallels to leaving out food for the Good Folk or offerings to voodoo loa should be obvious.

The Dutch brought St. Nicholas to New Amsterdam in the New World. After the British takeover in 1664 and the change to New York, the Dutch colonists fought to preserve their culture and traditions. The Knickerbockers were an active bunch of Dutch-descended intellectuals. Enter Washington Irving, one of the more prominent Knickerbockers. In 1809, he published The Knickerbocker's History of New York with several references to "Sinter Klaas," a modified form of "Sint Nikolaas." (Other important works of Irving's include *Rip Van Winkle* and *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*; maybe the Knickerbockers knew a bit of those things man Was Not Meant To Know?) Of particular note is that some of Irving's stories mention Sinter Klaas being pulled through the air in a flying wagon and dropping presents down chimneys. In some stories, a goat or goats pull the wagon. What other bearded mythological figure flies in a wagon pulled by goats? Thor the Thunderer.

Could Santa be a Norse storm-god in Christian drag? Puts the whole "popping Arius a good one" in another light, doesn't it? And if you look at the list of things Nicholas is patron saint of, another deity may spring to mind: Hermes, who was also a Swiss-Army-god of tricksters, thieves, pilgrims and travelers, trade (originally of the trade in corn), merchants, the messenger of the gods, psychopomp of the dead, and an early fertility deity (crude phallic images of him, called hermae, which were set up at crossroads and in front of houses).

Anyway, as the English in New York saw how much fun the Dutch were having, they adopted Sinter Klaas as their own. "Sinter Klaas" became Anglicized to "Santa Claus." And another New Yorker had an exceptionally important contribution to the legend -- Dr. Clement Clarke Moore, professor of divinity and friend of Washington Irving. In

1822, Moore penned his kids a Christmas poem; it appeared for public consumption on December 23rd, 1823 in the Troy, NY *Sentinel:* "'Twas the Night Before Christmas."

"'Twas the Night Before Christmas" added a few things to the Sinter Klaas legend. Moore changed the children's clogs into stockings, the wagon into a "miniature sleigh," the goats into reindeer, and the names he chose for the reindeer are now the accepted ones for Santa's team. Santa is now a "jolly old elf" (out-and-out admission of a connection to the Good Folk), and now Santa actually goes down the chimney himself rather than just dropping presents down it.

Moore denied writing the poem for twenty years, feeling that such an admission could hurt his academic credentials. Of course, that could merely be a convenient excuse. What if the poem is a factual account of a mortal-immortal meeting? Might not a powerful Seelie prince such as Santa bring great pressure upon one who revealed his secrets? You just need to read between the lines . . . Santa as a Seelie Prince -- a Christian Seelie Prince -- leads to at least one very interesting question: who converted him?

It was a long night, if it were only a night; but Scrooge had his doubts of this, because the Christmas Holidays appeared to be condensed into the space of time they passed together. It was strange, too, that while Scrooge remained unaltered in his outward form, the Ghost grew older, clearly older. Scrooge had observed this change, but never spoke of it, until they left a children's Twelfth Night party, when, looking at the Spirit as they stood together in an open place, he noticed that its hair was grey.
"Are spirits' lives so short?" asked Scrooge.
"My life upon this globe, is very brief," replied the Ghost. "It ends to-night."
"To-night!" cried Scrooge.
"To-night at midnight. Hark! The time is drawing near."
-- Charles Dickens, A Christmas Carol

The publication of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* in 1843 may lead us back, briefly to the idea of Santa Claus as spirit or loa. In particular, Santa has often been related to the Spirit of Christmas Present. If Santa is a spirit born youthful at the beginning of the Christmas holidays and elderly at the end, this may explain the perennial "What does Santa do for the rest of the year?" Answer: nothing, because he doesn't exist. He is a holiday phenomenon. Perhaps the Santa loa may only choose a mount during the Twelve Days of Christmas? Also notice the contraction of time: Santa as Time Lord?

On December 23rd, 1863, a Thomas Nast drawing of Santa Claus bringing Christmas presents to beleaguered Union soldiers during the American Civil War appeared in Harper's Weekly. Thomas Nast, you may remember, is the political cartoonist who gave the Democrats their donkey and the Republicans their elephant. Nast conflated Moore's Santa with . . . Uncle Sam. A jolly, roly-poly fellow in starry jacket, striped pants, and cap. So now Santa is an American patriot -- and a damnyankee at that -- and tangentially related to the two political parties that still hold sway in modern America. Coincidence, or indicative of some deeper meaning? Where does the military get those wonderful toys? Nast's Santa cartoons were so popular that Harper's asked him to do them each year for the next 40 years. Nast himself added many details to the legend: the switch from patriotic garb to plain (sometimes black and white) wool suit, the list of naughty and nice children, and the toy workshop.

And as long as we're speaking of the toy workshop, we may as well talk about L. Frank Baum (yes, the Royal Historian of Oz) and his stories "The Life and Adventures of Santa Claus" and "A Kidnapped Santa Claus." Both of these works are available online in numerous places as Project Gutenburg e-texts. In "The Life and Adventures . . . ," Neclaus (as he's called initially) is the first maker of toys. Indeed, all toy shops derive their wares from his workshop, where he and his attendant ryls, knooks, and Faeries labor to provide all the toys for the world. This is in conflict with Baum's later story "A Kidnapped Santa Claus" where the Daemon of Envy reproaches Santa with the existence of toyshops and the industrial production of toys. Santa seems nonplused by this, and says that he's glad to see toyshops, and hopes they prosper. When did people start competing in the toy industry with Santa? And what is he doing today, when all toys seem to be made by commercial companies? Is Santa still the sole toy-producer, and Hasbro, Mattel, Parker Brothers, etc. are merely shell companies for some vast Illuminati run behind the scenes by the Fat Man in Red? Or have the North Polar elvish production lines turned to increasingly special and unique toys? Could Santa be behind those strange and legended artisans, the Toymakers, or is it all just a red herring?

Back to the matter at hand: Baum's tales. We see that Santa may not be of Faerie blood at all, but "merely" a changeling. This variant is worked to great effect in Baum's story, as well as the 1970 Rankin/Bass Animagic (stop-motion animation) Christmas special, "Santa Claus is Comin' to Town," though with different emphases. In Baum's tale, the young babe is initially found by the Master Woodsman of the World (a veiled reference to the Horned God?) and given to the lioness Shiegra to suckle. Shades of Romulus and Remus! The infant is then adopted by Necile, the nymph. In the Rankin/Bass documentary, the baby -- bearing a medallion reading "Kringle" -- is found by a band of bachelor toymaker elves. In both stories, the found babe of unknown parentage -- especially with the lack of revelation as regards that parentage -- smacks much of the finding of the infant Taliesin: wrapped in a sealskin bag, caught within a trout weir, and rescued by Elphin ap Gwyddno.

Indeed, some circumstantial evidence for Santa as changeling may be found in a work by Rudyard Kipling, *Puck of Pook's Hill.* Published in 1906, *Puck of Pook's Hill* contains a story entitled "Dymchurch Flit" which details the Faerie exodus from England, possibly beyond the fields we know. In return for the labor of her two sons, a woman is granted the following boon from the Good Folk:

"So long as Whitgift blood lasted, Robin promised there would allers be one o' her stock that -- that no Trouble 'ud lie on, no Maid 'ud sigh on, no Night could frighten, no Fright could harm, no Harm could make sin, an' no Woman could make a fool of."

Comparing the blessings on the Whitgift line with the nature and known abilities of Santa is illuminating, especially as we compare Baum's characterization of Santa. And as long as we're in England, what of that other famous adoptee of the Faerie, Peter Pan? Could Peter be Santa? I don't see why not.

Indeed, a further step can be taken: from Faerie-beloved to Faerie himself. Consider just who grants this blessing upon the Whitgifts . . . Robin Goodfellow. The Puck. The connection between the Puck and the Pan is obvious, one trusts. This brings us back to the "Santa as Seelie Prince" concept with a fascinating twist: perhaps the Puck/Pan has a single evening of repentance that makes up for the rest of the year he spends in mischief?

We now come to 1931, an important year in the evolution of Santa Claus. In this year, artist Haddon Sundblom is hired by the Coca-Cola company to help create the image of Santa as a Coke drinker; you see, Coke was seen primarily as a summer drink, and the company wished to gain inroads into the holiday market. Sundblom is the man who gave Santa his red suit, trimmed in white -- not coincidentally, Coke's colors. (As an aside, the history of Coca-Cola is very interesting in and of itself; the original formula was invented by John Pemberton in 1886 and sold to a group of Atlanta druggists soon after, before Pemberton's untimely "death" in 1888. Was it murder? -- remember, the Ripper was active in 1888. Or did Pemberton merely fake his death after the original elixir granted him immortality? Maybe that's why Santa drinks it . . . And one cannot forget the mystery man who assured Coke's marketplace dominance; the mysterious stranger who told Asa Candler -- the only one of the Atlanta druggists interested in bringing Coke to the public -- how to achieve his dream in 1891. All he said was: "Bottle it." Could this mystery man be related to that mystery man who came out of nowhere to give Thomas Jefferson the design for the Great Seal of the United States? The fingerprints of the Illuminati again? And what if Santa's fortunes are tied to that of the Coca-Cola Company: what could have happened to Old Saint Nick in 1985, during the New Coke debacle?)

Some of the pictures of Father Christmas in our world make him look only funny and jolly. But now that the children actually stood looking at him they didn't find it quite like that. He was so big, and so real, that they all became quite still. They felt very glad, but also very solemn.
"I've come at last," said he. "She has kept me out for a long time, but I have got in at last. Aslan is on the move. The Witch's magic is weakening."
-- C.S. Lewis, The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe (1950)

Santa doesn't necessarily have to be played for laughs. Indeed, the appearance of Santa Claus as harbinger of the coming of Aslan in Narnia is anything but funny. Consider what his arrival presages. Any world with an extant Christianity or Christianity variant -- be it ***Pendragon's*** Arthurian Logres, White Wolf's ***World of Darkness,*** Narnia's Aslan, or ***GURPS'*** Yrth, could gain in depth with the inclusion of a "real," legendary, or mythological Santa Claus/Saint Nicholas. Perhaps the stern moralist would fit in better than the jolly children's saint; maybe the immortal

toymaker over the mortal brawler. No matter, there may be room for all iterations.

He punched out code on the scrambler, lifted the receiver and said, "The king fears the devil, and the devil fears the cross." Code and counter-code.
"Kris, it's S.P.I.D.E.R.," said the voice on the other end.
-- Harlan Ellison, "Santa Claus vs. S.P.I.D.E.R." (1968)

Santa Claus as a Black Op? Take a look at Harlan Ellison's "Santa Claus vs. S.P.I.D.E.R.," collected in *The Beast That Shouted Love At The Heart Of The World.* (Amateur hagiophiles, take note of the conflation of Santa/Kris Kringle with Saint Christopher, also a patron of travelers, and himself a mighty man.) The story walks that narrow edge between pulp action, super spy espionage, silliness, and sociopolitical commentary in a delightful romp. Ellison's got a killer reason for the red suit, too:

Kris kept looking at the suit. "What's new with that?"
The Armorer pointed with the stem of his pipe. It was a mannerism. "Well, you've got the usual stuff: the rockets, the jet-pack, the napalm, the mace and the Mace, the throwing knives, the high-pressure hoses, the boot-spikes, the .30 calibre machine guns, the acid, the flammable beard, the stomach still inflates into a raft, the flamethrower, the plastic explosives, the red rubber nose grenade, the belt tool-kit, the boomerang, the bolo, the bolas, the machete, the derringer, the belt-buckle time bomb, the lockpick equipment, the scuba gear, the camera and the Xerox attachment in the hips, the steel mittens with the extensible hooks, the gas mask, the poison gas, the shark repellent, the sterno stove, the survival rations and the microfilm library of one hundred great books . . . In addition, this time the suit has been fully automated, and when you depress this third button on the jacket, the entire suit becomes inflatable, airborne, and seals for high-level flight."
Kris pulled a sour face. "If I ever fall over I'll be like a turtle on it's back."
. . . [The Armorer] pointed to the boots. "Gyroscopes. Keep you level at all times. You can't fall over."

And for those enamored of the darker aspects of things, there's also such movies as *Silent Night, Deadly Night* featuring a psychotic Santa. Indeed, if one wished, one could read the following passage quite differently from Baum's "The Life and Adventures of Santa Claus:"

"[The Mantle of Immortality] became a part of his being, and neither mortal nor immortal might ever take it from him . . . And Claus slept on, the red blood of everlasting life coursing swiftly through his veins . . . and over his lips hovered a tender kiss that had been left by the sweet nymph Necile. For she had stolen in when the others were gone to gaze with rapture upon the immortal form of her foster son."

Sounds suspiciously like the embrace of a vampire, doesn't it? Might explain why Santa lives near the North Pole: six months of continual night sounds pretty good if one's undead . . . What about a psionic Santa? Gives a whole new twist on "He knows if you've been bad or good, so be good for goodness sake," doesn't it? What if all the Salvation Army and department store Santas are just part of one alien hive-mind, reporting to a Queen Santa? Maybe bumping that "n" from the middle of his name to the end is more than just a anagrammical lark? How about a super/pulp villain who kills in a typical "locked room" mystery fashion, leaving his victims with a lump of coal in their mouths and a note pinned to their chests' reading "naughty" (or a candy cane and a note reading "nice")? Try conflating Robin Hood, Santa, and Ellison's Harlequin (from the killer short story "'Repent Harlequin!' said the Ticktockman") to get a netrunner who robs from those he sees as "naughty" to give presents and treats to those he sees as "nice"? The possibilities are endless!

Bibliography

Along with the books listed above, check out these links:

Does Santa Exist? Rebuttals

Santa Claus Conquers the Martians (1964)

[Miracle on 34th Street (1947)]

[Yahoo: Santa Claus]

Some Classic Randomness

by Robert M. Brown

GURPS and ***Traveller*** have vastly different character generation systems, which makes translating the feel of Classic ***Traveller*** over to ***GURPS*** an interesting challenge. The Template system in ***GURPS: Traveller*** provides a quick way of generating characters who fit the background, but some players, whether old time ***Traveller*** players, or people who've never played ***Traveller*** but want to try something different, will want to do things the old fashioned way, with randomly generated characters.

The system outlined in this article tries to simulate the Character Generation system of Classic ***Traveller*** as closely as possible within the ***GURPS*** framework. People familiar with Classic ***Traveller*** will note some changes. Most notably, there is no separate Mustering Out table, since ***GURPS*** handles starting money separately, and the Survival Roll is also gone. (No one wants their ***GURPS*** character dying before he even gets into play!). The vast number of Skills available in ***GURPS,*** compared to Classic ***Traveller,*** also required some tweaking of the skill assignment process, to keep the process simple while still allowing a full range of skills.

Characters created with this system may exceed 100 Character Points, especially if they serve several terms of enlistment, and will almost certainly not all be equal. For this reason, GMs may chose to limit how many terms a character can serve, and will also have to consider the nature of their gaming groups to determine if the two character generation systems should be mixed. Some players will be resentful if they make their characters by the standard rules and are limited to 100 Character Points, but someone else comes up with a 125 point character through these rules. Depending on your group, it may be best to have everyone use the same character generation method, whichever one that may be.

Character Generation

The ***GURPS Basic, Compendium I*** and ***Traveller*** books are all recommended.

There are 5 steps to creating a character by this system.
1. Make a 'base' character.
2. Enter a service.
3. Make a success roll, and determine Advantages or Disadvantages acquired.
4. Make a reenlistment roll.
5. Determine Skills acquired.

Repeat these steps until the character leaves the service and enters play.

Step 1. The Character

Make a 50 point character with the normal GURPS rules. It is suggested that this character have no more than -10 points in Disadvantages. Certain Disadvantages (such as Primitive, and most physical Disadvantages) should not be allowed. Quirks may be assigned at this time, or just before the character enters play. This is your young recruit, about to join the service.

Step 2. Enlisting

Next, refer to the Enlistment Table, and try to join one of the six branches of service. To enlist in a service, the player must make the roll indicated in the column for that service. (All rolls on this table except the Draft roll are on 3d6). A Die Roll Modifier of +1, +2, or both (+3) may apply, if the character has a particular attribute at a given level or higher. If he fails the Enlistment roll, he may put the character through the Draft. Roll 1d6 to see which service he ends up in (Note that it is possible to end up being drafted into the same service which just rejected you).

Step 3. Success (and Failure)

After Enlisting, the player then tries to make the Success roll. Making this roll entitles the player to one roll on the Bonus Table, plus one additional roll for every 2 that the roll was made by. If this roll is failed by more than 3, the player must roll on the Disadvantage Table. (For example, the Marines has a Success roll of 10+. A character rolling a 14 would be entitled to 3 rolls on the Bonus Table. A roll of 6 or less would require a roll on the Disadvantage Table.) In addition, certain results on the Bonus Table may require a roll on the Disadvantage table as well (these are marked on the table). Note that it is possible to gain both a positive and negative Reputation in the same term.

There are four different Skill Roll results available; one each for the Personal Development, Service Skills, and Advanced Education Tables, and one that can be applied to any table the player chooses. Unlike the skill rolls that the player gets for each term, or promotions, these rolls apply only to that particular table. ***Example****: A Scout character rolls a 6 for his Bonus Table roll, giving him a roll on any skill table. He picks the Personal Development Table, and rolls a 6, Personal Weapons. He picks Beam Weapon (Laser) and records 1 point in the new skill.*

Some of the Advantages and Disadvantages gained in this step may have variable point costs, such as Reputation. These are considered to be at the lowest point cost when first acquired. (A 1 Character Point Reputation, for example.) If the same Advantage or Disadvantage is rolled again, the points are added to raise the value of that Advantage or Disadvantage (a 1 CP Reputation, for example, becomes a 2 CP one). The details of Reputations, Enemies, etc., should be worked out by the player and GM.

Some of the duplicate results rolled will not be variable cost Advantages or Disadvantages. These can be handled a few different ways. Some, such as Cool have higher cost related Advantages (and Disadvantages). A second result of Cool can be taken as replacing Cool with Collected or Composed. A second Bloodlust result could turn Bloodlust into Sadism or Berserk. Or the GM may assign a different result, let the player roll again, or give the character the points (or some of the points) to spend himself. Some flexibility and GM discretion in this process may be needed. The important thing, as always, is to use these tables as a tool to create interesting characters, not a straitjacket to force a player into playing a character he doesn't want to.

Step 4. Reenlisting

The Reenlist roll must be rolled, even if the player does not want his character to serve another term; on a roll of 18 the character is *required* to serve another term of enlistment. If the roll is made with any result other than an 18, the player may decide to continue for another term, or leave the service. If the roll is failed, the character leaves the service.

When a character leaves the service, his point total is tallied up. If it is below 100 points (or whatever level the GM is using for that particular campaign), the player may spend points to bring the character up to that level. The details of this first post-service career should be included in the character story. The character's age is 18 plus 4 years for each term of enlistment, plus any years in a post-service career.

After the Reenlistment roll has been made (whether passed or failed), the skills gained in that term are determined. Certain skills and advantages are gained automatically, just for being in a certain service, or achieving a certain Rank (The Bonus Table lists Rank as Courtesy Rank because the character enters actual play as a civilian, but still entitled to a certain respect due to his past rank). See the Automatic Skills and Advantages table.

Lastly, the player rolls for any other skills gained in that term of enlistment. The number of rolls is as follows; 4 (1 for each year) plus 1 for the character's first term, plus one for each level of rank gained that term.

There are four Skill tables, each reflecting a slightly different focus. The fourth table, Officer, is only available to characters holding at least 3 levels of Courtesy Rank. Roll 1d6. Find that result in the column for the character's service for *each* of the skill tables that that character is eligible for, and record 1 character point in the new skills. ***Example****: A Navy character with no Courtesy Rank rolls a 2 for his skill roll. He gains 1 point in Fast Talk from the Personal Development Table, 1 point in Forward Observer from the Service Skills Table, and 1 point in one skill from the Intelligence group from the Advanced Education Table. If he had had 3 or more levels of Courtesy Rank he would have gained 1 point in Strategy from the Officer Table as well.*

Repeat until all of the character's skill rolls for that term have been made.

One possible result on the Personal Development Skill Table is +1 Attribute. The GM should monitor this carefully. Given the low number of Character Points available for creating the base character, and the random nature of the table, it is unlikely that players will be able to abuse this by raising Attributes to unreasonable levels, but some will try. For this reason it is suggested that no Attribute may be raised above 15.

Note that some of the entries on the Skill table are not individual skills, but skill groups. If a skill group is rolled, select one skill from that group. In addition, some of the skills require specialization; in some cases the required specialization is noted, on others it is left up to the player. If the same skill is rolled or selected more than once, 1 additional Character Point is added each time.

Optionally, at this point the GM may allow players to select one additional skill, not necessarily on the Skill Tables, to spend a character point on. This represents interests that the character has been pursuing on his own time in that four year period.

After skills have been determined, the character either proceeds to his next term of enlistment, or leaves the service and enters play.

Customization

These rules are optimized to produce characters in the 100 point range in 3-4 terms of service. Good or bad rolls will vary this, of course. Some players and GMs will want characters who are younger, more powerful, or both. These GMs are encouraged to customize these rules to suit their individual campaign. Some suggestions are: Increase the number of skill rolls per term of enlistment, allow more rolls on the Bonus Table (one additional roll for each point the Success roll is made by, rather than one for every 2 points, for example), assigning variable point Advantages (and Disadvantages) a higher than minimum value, and starting with higher value 'core' characters. The GM should, of course, also feel free to customize the Bonus, Disadvantage, and Skill tables to suit his campaign.

Lastly, it is worth pointing out that this system will work, with minor modification, for generating military veteran characters in virtually any setting. Change a few Skills and Advantages and you can turn out veterans of the Megalan Legions as easily as veterans of the Imperial Marines.

Skill Groups

Personal Weapons:
Armory (Small Arms), Battlesuit, Beam Weapons, Brawling, Broadsword, Fast Draw, Fencing, Guns, Knife, Knife Throwing, Spear, Speed Load, Staff.

Intelligence:
Cryptanalysis, Cryptography, Intelligence Analysis, Language, SIGINT, Traffic Analysis.

Medical:
Diagnosis, First Aid, Language, Physician, Surgery.

Social:
Acting, Bribery, Carousing, Gambling, Language, Teaching.

Charts and Tables

Enlistment Table

	Navy	Marines	Army	Scouts	Merchant	Other
Enlistment	12+	13+	8+	10+	10+	6+
+1 Enlistment	IQ 11+	HT 11+	DX 10+	IQ 10+	ST 10+	
+2 Enlistment	IQ 13+	ST 11+	HT 11+	ST 11+	IQ 11+	
Draft	1	2	3	4	5	6
Success	10+	10+	9+	10+	8+	11+
Reenlist	9+	9+	10+	6+	7+	8+

Success Bonus Table

Roll	Navy	Marines	Army	Scouts	Merchant	Other

(3d6)						
3	Favor	Very Fit	Hard to Kill	Favor	Patron	Cool
4	Combat Reflexes	Toughness	Favor	Luck	Intuition	Common Sense
5 *	Alertness	Fit	Toughness	Strong Will	Contact	Contact
6	G Experience	Skill Roll (Personal Development)	Fearless	Skill Roll (Any)	Favor	Skill Roll (Any)
7 *	Contact	Fearless	Courtesy Rank	Contact	Reputation	Wealth
8	Skill Roll (Personal Development)	G Experience	Cool	Skill Roll (Personal Development)	Courtesy Rank	Skill Roll (Personal Development)
9	Acceleration Tolerance	Skill Roll (Service Skills)	Skill Roll (Personal Development)	3D Spacial Sense	Skill Roll (Personal Development)	Alertness
10	Courtesy Rank	Courtesy Rank	Courtesy Rank	Skill Roll (Service Skills)	Courtesy Rank	Skill Roll (Service Skills)
11 *	Skill Roll (Service Skills)	Alertness	Skill Roll (Service Skills)	Danger Sense	Contact	Favor
12	Courtesy Rank	Skill Roll (Advanced Education)	Courtesy Rank	Alertness	Skill Roll (Service Skills)	Contact
13 *	3D Spacial Sense	Combat Reflexes	Alertness	Skill Roll (Advanced Education)	Wealth	Acute Sense
14	Reputation	High Pain Threshold	Skill Roll (Advanced Education)	G Experience	Courtesy Rank	Skill Roll (Advanced Education)
15 *	Patron	Reputation	High Pain Threshold	Reputation	Claim to Hospitality	Wealth
16	Skill Roll (Advanced Education)	Contact	Combat Reflexes	Versatile	Ally Group	Strong Will

17	Improved G Tolerance	Patron	Reputation	Intuition	Cultural Adaptability	Reputation
18	Security Clearance	Hard to Kill	Patron	Ship	Ship	Patron

** Roll on Disadvantage Table.*
The player may chose to apply a Die Roll Modifier of +1 for each previous term of enlistment, and an additional +1 if the character has accumulated at least 3 levels of Courtesy Rank. The player should declare before rolling if he will be taking this modifier. ***Example****: A character in his second term with 2 levels of Courtesy Rank would get a +1 on this table. If he were promoted again, on his next (third) term he would be entitled to a +3.*

Disadvantage Table

Roll (3d6)	Disadvantage	Notes
3-4	Phobia	
5	Appearance	Unattractive Appearance, probably scarring as a result of injuries.
6	Callous	
7	Post-Combat Shakes	
8	Stubbornness	
9-11	Reputation	A bad reputation worth -1 points. Cumulative.
12	Enemy	A minor Enemy worth -3 points. Successive Enemy results on this table may be either additional Enemies, or add to the point value of the initial Enemy, at the player and GM's discretion.
13	Flashback	
14	Overconfidence	
15	Sense of Duty	At the -5 point level. Cumulative.
16	Secret	A minor Secret worth -5 points. Successive Secret results on this table may be either additional Secrets or add to the point value of the initial Secret.
17-18	Bloodlust	

Automatic Skills and Advantages

Condition	Navy	Marines	Army	Scouts	Merchant	Other
Automatic on Enlistment	Savoir Faire (Military)	Savoir Faire (Military) Shortsword	Savoir Faire (Military) Guns (Rifle)	Pilot (Starship)	Merchant	Streetwise
Rank 3	Status +1	Status +1 Guns (Pistol)	Status +1 Guns (Pistol)			
Rank 5					Pilot (Starship)	
Rank 6	Status +1					
Rank 8	Status +1	Status +1	Status +1			

Skill Tables

Roll (1d6)	Navy	Marines	Army	Scouts	Merchant	Other
Personal Development						
1	+1 Attribute	+1 Attribute	+1 Attribute	+1 Attribute	+1 Attribute	+1 Attribute
2	+1 Attribute	Fast Talk	Fast Talk	Free Fall	Fast Talk	Scrounging
3	Fast Talk	Area Knowledge	Area Knowledge	Scrounging	Area Knowledge	Fast Talk
4	Area Knowledge	Leadership	Leadership	Area Knowledge	Merchant	Area Knowledge
5	*Personal Weapons*	*Personal Weapons*	*Personal Weapons*	Survival	*Personal Weapons*	Streetwise
6	Free Fall	*Social*	*Social*	*Personal Weapons*	*Social*	*Personal Weapons*
Service Skills	**Navy**	**Marines**	**Army**	**Scouts**	**Merchant**	**Other**
1	Electronic	Vacc Suit	Driving	Pilot (Grav	Vacc Suit	Cooking

	Operations			Vehicles)		
2	Forward Observer	Driving	Pilot (Grav Vehicles)	Vacc Suit	*Personal Weapons*	*Social*
3	Mechanic	*Personal Weapons*	Gunner	Mechanic	Electronics	*Social*
4	Pilot	*Personal Weapons*	*Personal Weapons*	Astrogation	Administration	*Personal Weapons*
5	Gunner	*Personal Weapons*	*Personal Weapons*	Electronics	Streetwise	Demolitions
6	Vacc Suit	*Personal Weapons*	Electronic Operations	Gunner	Electronic Operations	Forgery
Advanced Education	**Navy**	**Marines**	**Army**	**Scouts**	**Merchant**	**Other**
1	Astrogation	Driving	Mechanic	Pilot	Mechanic	Medical
2	*Intelligence*	Mechanic	Engineer (Combat)	Astrogation	Electronics	Electronics
3	Electronics	Tactics	Forward Observer	Astrogation	*Medical*	*Social*
4	*Medical*	Tactics	*Personal Weapons*	Engineer	*Social*	Forgery
5	Demolition	Demolition	Tactics	Electronic Operations	Gunner	Electronic Operations
6	Engineering	*Medical*	*Medical*	Pilot	Pilot	Mechanic
Officer	**Navy**	**Marines**	**Army**		**Merchant**	
1	Administration	Administration	Administration		Administration	
2	Strategy	*Intelligence*	*Intelligence*		*Intelligence*	
3	*Intelligence*	Electronics	Engineering (Combat)		Merchant	
4	Electronics	Strategy	Strategy		Area Knowledge	
5	Tactics	Leadership	Leadership		Diplomacy	

6	Leadership	Tactics	Tactics		Accounting	

Italics indicates a Skill Group.

Gettin' the Drop on Cheatin' Varmints!

By John Goff

The game mechanic used by the ***Doomtown*** collectible card game to represent combat is unique among the Texas-sized stampede of card games to hit the market since ***Magic: The Gathering*** hit the market back in 1993. In keeping with the game's theme, its designers have incorporated a variation on the game of poker to simulate shootouts between each player's dudes as they struggle for control of the mining town of Gomorra. This innovative mechanic is one of the CCG's many strong points and helps provide a dusty, western atmosphere to game play, much like the use of a poker deck and chips does to the ***Deadlands*** RPG.

If there's a drawback to this nifty mechanic, it's the very fact the game is a CCG. Like most other games of its kind, ***Doomtown*** lets players pretty much design and build their own decks, including whatever cards they see fit. Now, it didn't take the cardsharps too long to figure out they can build a deck designed to win shootouts by "cheating" on the poker hands. Before somebody gets riled up and rousts up a lynch mob, let me explain what "cheating" in ***Doomtown*** means. If a player has two cards of the same suit and value in a normal poker game (say, two aces of spades), he's cheating. But since ***Doomtown*** players can build their own decks, it's fairly commonplace for this to happen in this far-from-normal poker game. It's not a violation of the game's rules, but it's called "cheating" simply as a game term to describe the situation.

All an unscrupulous snake's belly has to do is stack his deck with a passel of cards of the same value, virtually guaranteeing he'll draw at least 3 of a kind, a full house, or even better on any hand. And with the variety of cards available now that the Rolling Thunder distribution system is under way, it's not hard to build a viable deck with one or two values alone -- 3s, 5s, 6s, and 9s seemed to be the favored values of these sidewinders.

Until recently, a whole herd of anti-cheating cards kept the worst of these decks in line. Any bandit counting on cheating poker hands ran the risk of losing a deed to *Foreclosure,* provoking someone to *Get a Rope* or even having a dude die from *Snakebite.* Then along came the card *No Funny Stuff,* which prevents any further actions or reactions from taking place during a shootout -- including those anti-cheatin' cards. Now, cheatin' decks are pretty much top dog when it comes to slinging lead on the streets of Gomorra. Don't get me wrong -- I don't disapprove of this strategy. On the contrary, I've got plenty of decks designed to cheat myself. But I know from experience how frustrating it can be playing a theme deck designed for fun against one of these quickdraw specials. After one too many of my own dudes ended up in Boot Hill, I sat down and came up with a few strategies to beat these bottom-dealing hucksters. The Law of the West dictates I share them with others.

Anti-Cheatin' Cards

No Funny Stuff stops anti-cheatin' cards during shootouts, but that doesn't make them useless. During the opening phase of each turn, there's still the lowball poker hand to determine who wins the ante and gets to go first that turn. While most anti-cheatin' cards work best during a shootout, a few are just as nasty at punishing your opponent during the lowball hand.

Foreclosure, which forces the varmint to discard one of his deeds in play, can be downright painful for cheatin' decks. It works fine during the lowball hand and,

if you choose wisely, can cost your opponent ghost rock production, Control Points, and even send his dudes home booted -- effectively out of action for the turn! The only drawback is if the dudes have squatted on your own property and are using it for Control Points or abilities. *Foreclosure* only works on deeds owned by the cheater.

Run Out of Town gives you a pretty good chance at sending your opponent's weaker dudes running to the discard pile. This can put a hurting on his firepower, but, more importantly, his influence. *Run Out of Town* can help regain control of deeds, swing influence to your favor, or even put you in a winning position. However, it's doubtful the card can take care of the high value shooters in your opponent's posse -- and those often are the toughest gunslingers or have the highest influence!

Yellow Traitor, a relative newcomer to the card mix, costs the cheater a Control Point permanently. Since it can be played several times during a game, it can almost guarantee a serious cheatin' deck has no chance of winning by Control Points. On the other hand, *Yellow Traitor* has no effect on Victory Points, so outfits like the Law Dogs and the Agency, which can earn Victory Points, can still win. Also, *Yellow Traitor* doesn't help your outfit win the game; it only prevents your opponent from doing so. It is possible to stalemate a game in this fashion.

Fight on Your Own Terms

While anti-cheatin' cards can help balance out the advantage a cheatin' deck has, it's still up to your outfit to win the game. That usually means going out into the streets of Gomorra and using influence to gain control of important deeds. Unfortunately, that also exposes your dudes to the guns of your opponent. With all the cards that allow shootouts in an outfit's home, even decks that could previously win while staying hidden at home are now at risk of having some pistolero come in and throw down on them. It's almost certain you're going to risk facing a shootout with a cheatin' gunslinger at some point. The secret to winning a gunfight with one of these varmints is to pick when you fight them.

Cheatin' decks aren't likely to win the lowball hand at the beginning of each round. That means you're probably going to go first in the turn and get the first Shootout Action in any gunfights that do come up, so you get to play a Shootout Action before your opponent can shut you down with a *No Funny Stuff.* Also, your opponent is losing 1 ghost rock to ante each round in addition to any upkeep he's paying. If you can further shut down his income, he'll be limited in his own actions each round.

Scout Them Out

Knowledge of what your opponent's holding in his play hand before getting into a gunfight is a necessity, especially if he's using *No Funny Stuff.* Two dudes, The *Amazing Xemo* and *Sandra Harris* let you look at a card at random from his hand, so unless he's down to one card when you use it, you'll never know what else he's holding. *Friends in Low Places* tips his entire hand to you, but since it's an Action card, you can only use it when you draw it in your play hand. Probably the best spy in the game is the drifter huckster *Sir Whitmore.* For a mere 1 ghost rock, he'll tell you everything your opponent's holding. Since he's non-unique, there's no reason to not put him in your deck -- or possibly even start the game with him in play.

Once you know what your opponent's holding, you can easily plan your own strategy. If he's got a *No Funny Stuff,* maybe you'll want to pick a fight with his dudes using one of your less valuable dudes in the hopes of drawing it out of his hand. If he guts it out and doesn't play the card, his dude's vulnerable to your Shootout Actions and Reactions; if he does play it, you can start another shootout later that round with out worrying about it!

Hog Tie Them

Another key to avoiding a shootout until you're ready is to keep your opponent's dudes tied up. A number of cards provide the ability to boot dudes, and booted dudes usually can't call out other dudes . . . or at least they can't run them down and then call them out. Once you've locked them down, you're free to avoid them or even pounce on them if the time's right. Action cards like *Bad Tequila* and *The Fear* can help, but if you don't draw them, you can't use them. Some Events, such as *The Fair Comes to Town* or *Long Arm of the Law,* boot large numbers of dudes at a time, but they're even less reliable than Action cards. The dudes *Meredith Singleton, Basil Whateley* and *Will o' the Wisp* and the Goods card *Still* provide the ability to boot a dude fairly reliably turn after turn. Finally, the Hex *Texas Twister* is probably the single best card for confounding an opponent's dudes -- it easy to cast successfully, works every turn, and, best of all, the ever-useful *Sir Whitmore* can cast it!

If All Else Fails, Run Away!

If all else fails and you find one of your dudes facing down a cheatin' gunslinger, don't be afraid to turn tail and run! Refuse the shootout and head for home, booted if possible. If your poor sod's already booted, *Ignore 'im* can still get him out of a contest of six-guns (hopefully, you won the lowball hand this round!). Best of all, *Ignore 'im's* value is a King, which works great for casting Hexes, Miracles, or Spirits -- like *Texas Twister.* A new Miracle, *Calm* (also a King, by the way), works great for stopping a shootout once it's underway with the added bonus of sending everyone in it home booted!

The Latest Dispatch

As of right now, *No Funny Stuff* does stop anti-cheatin' cards. However, there's some pretty serious talk among the ***Doomtown*** design team about errata for the card stating that anti-cheatin' cards are not affected by it. Even then, *No Funny Stuff* will still prevent a host of cards folks depend on to protect them in when the lead starts flying. Cheatin' decks will still hold the upper hand in a shootout -- after all, a cowpoke can only fit so many anti-cheatin' cards into his gunbelt. Even so, as long as you pick your gunfights carefully, odds are the undertaker will be fitting your opponent for the pine box instead of you.

Ryan Dancey Speaks!

By Ryan S. Dancey

[*Editor's Note:* Ryan S. Dancey sent me this letter recently, and I felt it had enough information about the behind-the-scenes of Five Rings Publishing to be worth publishing in its entirety. Dancey's quotes are from Steve Fritz' original article about the company.]

I was recently forwarded a copy of an article that ran on your on-line ezine regarding Five Rings Publishing Group written by Steve Fritz. This article contains numerous misstatements of fact and outright inaccuracies, and I would like to take a few minutes to review them and provide some more detailed explanation for you, your readers, and Mr. Fritz.

A fairly comprehensive history of FRPG and the evolution of the ***Legend of the Five Rings*** TCG can be found on the FRPG website. That history outlines the struggle to design, produce and market the game in the period prior to the acquisition of FRPG by Wizards of the Coast. Had Mr. Fritz read that material he would have been able to eliminate several outright factual errors from his piece.

Of course, once the business was acquired, the complexion of the operation changed. Though it is not my normal *modus operandi* to go into detail on the inner workings of FRPG, in this case I will make an exception to provide clarification, correction, and illumination (ha ha) for your readership. They may either find it very interesting, or the worst kind of corporate spin-doctorship, depending on their personal notions of me and Wizards.

The best place to begin, I suppose, is at the beginning.

*"Five Rings was an unusual amalgam of people from Alderac Entertainment (then best known for publishing **Shadis**)"*

In actual fact, the only person employed by AEG who ever worked for FRPG as a staff member was John Zinser. Five Rings was based in Bellevue, Washington. The commute from AEG's headquarters in Ontario, California would have been burdensome indeed!

The organization was formed as a natural outcome of the joint venture between AEG and my other company, ISOMEDIA. When we decided to spin the L5R project out into its own corporate entity, that new firm (FRPG) was owned jointly by the principles of AEG, the principles of ISOMEDIA, and a group of outside investors with no connection to either the gaming industry, or to either of the parent companies.

*"As is now well known, FRPG created a minuscule run for its first edition of **L5R,** the aforementioned **Imperial** set. If I remember my history correctly, they did it primarily to get some attention for the game at the 1996 GenCon. With the sales, they quickly invested the money into the second, **"Emerald"** edition."*

We produced (and distributed for free) a limited set of "preview cards" for GenCon in 1995. Those cards were printed on a 100-card sheet, and that sheet was not used again in the production of the game. When the ***Imperial Edition*** was released in October of 1995, most of the cards that had been "previewed" were reprinted, many with slight corrections and tweaked artwork. The ***Imperial Edition*** and the ***Emerald Edition*** (which followed about six months later in 1996) were the same size in terms of print run. To produce those cards we used capital invested into FRPG at its creation. The profit from the ***Imperial Edition*** was used to pay production, development, and marketing costs related to its release. It was not used to fund any further print runs.

*"The really important news was by 1997, **L5R** was THE hot CCG on the market. It was firmly entrenched in the #2 slot, beating out the likes of **Star Trek, OverPower** and **Star Wars** for that slot. And Five Rings was as strong on tournament support as WotC."*

While I may wish that were true, just for the sake of my own hubris, in fact the ***Star Wars*** game was at that time (and continues to be today) the #2 game by any measurement. The #3 game has varied over time, from ***Star Trek*** to ***Babylon 5,*** but ***L5R*** has remained consistently in the Top 5.

Our tournament support was quite good (a little bragging here), but the number of tournaments sanctioned by WotC dwarfed ***L5R*** (probably by a ratio of 1,000 : 1).

[Text about ***Dune*** deleted] *"There were cards in the preview decks, such as the venture Stranglehold, that somehow had developed typos in the final print run. The card now said "Stanglehold." Enhancement cards were suddenly being keyed "Enahancement"; lots of them as a matter of fact. The art all looked like it was filtered through some sort of dark cloth."*

Dune has a long, and somewhat sad history, and its initial launch is a large part of that. Last Unicorn Games (owners of the game, and solely responsible for its content) were supposed to deliver finished files ready for output to film for the game to FRPG. After some delays related to licensing issues, these files were handed off to FRPG at about the time the acquisition by WotC was being finalized. We sent the files down to the WotC pre-press department to be output to film. In the middle of the night, I received a call from the WotC pre-press team telling me that there were serious problems with the files.

Due to a variety of factors not really relevant to this discussion, the files that LUG had provided were essentially unusable. In order to hold the print deadline that we had established for the game, the entire set had to be re-typeset and the graphics had to be re-separated and re-placed into their framing elements in less than 48 hours. To accomplish that, the WotC typesetting crew pulled two consecutive all-nighters and essentially rebuilt the product from scratch -- a task that normally takes two to three weeks of time. It was during that period that the "spelling" errors were introduced into the set. In the haste to check costs, alignment, trapping, and the other elements associated with the cards, we did not perform a final "spell check" loop outside the computers where the cards were being typeset. In hindsight, if we had we might have caught the two major repeating errors. The dictionaries being used to re-typeset the cards both had mistakes introduced by human error in their "dictionaries" that resulted in terms like "Engagment" instead of "Engagement."

Dune continued to be a struggle throughout its lifecycle. The licensing between the Herbert Estate and MCA/Universal was very entangled. Last Unicorn relocated from Pennsylvania to Los Angeles and assumed the burden of producing the ***Star Trek Role Playing Game,*** which ate into their capital resources and their own time. The game suffered from production delays, licensing delays, illustration and design delays, and proved to be too complex for the average player to master. The rulebook, while a fantastic example of capturing the essence of a licensed property did not accomplish its primary job of education and reference, and the game suffered terribly due to its undeserved reputation as being "the most complex TCG." We never recaptured the momentum we had going into the winter of 1997, and I deeply regret that. The game is at its heart a very elegant and entertaining product, and I'm glad we got it to market, and sad that we didn't have more success with it.

"Also at that time, Five Rings was in the process of moving their offices from California to WotC HQ in Renton, Washington."

We actually relocated from Bellevue (which is about twenty minutes north of Renton) to the WotC HQ in the winter of 1997 over Christmas break. The move was fairly uneventful, and had little impact on our day to day operations.

"*Once the move was completed, the new head of the Five Rings division of WotC, Ryan Dancey, made the announcement that I think really killed the game. He had developed a marketing program he called Rolling Thunder. The idea was instead of coming out with quarterly releases of large sets of new CCG product, put out smaller sets on a monthly schedule."*

I was the former Vice President of Product Development at FRPG, and initiated the ***L5R*** joint venture while at ISOMEDIA in 1994. After the WotC acquisition, the former FRPG CEO (whom I had hired to run the business during the formation and startup phases) left to pursue other opportunities, and as the ranking staff member I assumed control of the business as a component of the New Brands Development & Licensing department within WotC.

Prior to the acquisition, beginning in the early spring of 1997, John Zinser, Danny Landers (now president at Last Unicorn Games) and I had been working on the Rolling Thunder program. We based our model for RT on feedback we had been receiving from retailers and consumers for months prior in an attempt to find a way to produce a TCG at far lower print runs than were otherwise profitable. At the time (and to some extent even now) I was convinced that not only were we going to be creating a new business model for adventure game stores, but we'd be pioneering a new phase in the TCG evolution.

When we announced the program in conjunction with the ***Scorpion Clan Coup*** release for ***L5R,*** things looked very promising. ***SCC*** had the highest print run of any ***L5R*** release in history -- by nearly 30%. We literally had distributors yelling at John and myself over our restricted allocation of product -- they demanded that we produce more cards and fulfill the orders they had pouring in via phone and fax. Throughout the three months of the release of ***SCC,*** we heard very good feedback from fans about how easy the set was to collect and how much fun they were having with the format.

By the time we got to the GAMA Trade Show in Florida later that year, however, it had become obvious that the cards were not selling as fast as we had hoped and that there were serious concerns about the release format.

Those concerns essentially fell into two groups: The lack of rarity engendered a lack of interest, and the frequency of the release made last month's inventory "unsalable" because now it was "out of date." Related to that last concern were issues regarding the destabilizing influence of the RT system on our growing organized play component.

Our end-of-the-day analysis is that RT did not work as planned, and it may have done more harm than good.

I am often asked why we put all the 1998 games into RT as an untried system -- especially ***L5R.*** My answer is pretty simple: We honestly believed that the system would work, that it was an improvement on the current system, and that to hold back ***L5R*** would have sent the wrong message to our licensors and our customers.

"It should then come as no surprise that -- even though WotC hasn't officially announced it -- the Rolling Thunder format is as good as dead."

That's true (and it's been officially announced). The idea of monthly releases is being abandoned.

However, we gained a tremendous amount of data from our experience, and that data could probably have been gathered in no other way. We learned that regular releases *do* work -- instead of shipping cards willy-nilly when the mood (and the printer's schedule) strike us, telling gamers they can expect cards at such and such a regular interval was appreciated and effective.

We also learned a lot about the limits of our ability to control cards on a per-pack basis. One of the key assumptions made in Rolling Thunder was that across thousands of booster packs, small deviations from expected averages would be insignificant. We discovered that not only were those effects magnified by the small set sizes, they were further magnified by the frequency of the releases.

So we're going to end up going back to a more "traditional" quarterly or semi-annual release schedule. But we're going to use a lot of our hard-won data to improve that model as well.

*"An interesting side note about all the Five Rings games is they are all licensed from outside companies (Alderac retains the rights to the **Five Rings** and **Burning Sands** universes, **Doomtown** is Pinnacle Entertainment,* [accurate ***Dune*** and ***Rage*** licensing text deleted]). *While WotC isn't saying a darn thing, these licensees are having a tough time keeping their mouths shut. As it stands, all these companies are sitting with WotC's lawyers and renegotiating their licensing agreements. Due to the collapse of Rolling Thunder, WotC is unable to fulfill a single one."*

This is patently untrue.

Wizards of the Coast owns the ***Emerald Empire*** properties (***Legend of the Five Rings*** and ***Legend of the Burning Sands***) outright. AEG licenses that material from WotC for it's successful RPG and miniatures games.

WotC also owns the ***Doomtown*** game -- but the ***Deadlands*** IP (intellectual property) that it is based on is owned by Pinnacle Entertainment Group.

We have met or exceeded every provision in our contracts with our licensors. We have paid every royalty, advanced every guarantee, and submitted to all required approvals. We are not in litigation with anyone, nor are we likely to be over our TCG efforts. While we are certainly not happy that we did not revolutionize the TCG business with Rolling Thunder, it cannot be considered a "collapse." We generated tremendous sales across six lines of business and did so over a sustained period of time.

We are discussing our options with Last Unicorn Games with regard to their ***Dune*** game. I do not know what will happen to ***Dune*** in the future, but I am sure that if Last Unicorn believes they have a market for the product, that they will come to some arrangement, either with WotC or with a 3rd party.

We're certainly happy with our current relations with White Wolf and with Pinnacle -- both ***Rage*** and ***Doomtown*** are doing quite well.

"The announcement that Ryan Dancey has moved from Five Rings to TSR is another strong indicator of how things are going. He isn't the only person who has either been moved, quit or laid off (in some cases I'm still not sure which is which) at Five Rings. The important point is no one is replacing this lost personnel. Whatever the situation, it's a textbook case of a division slowly being closed down."

I have a very strong relationship with senior management at Wizards of the Coast. TSR has been through several very, very rough years, and they believe that my particular style of brand management, team building, strategic planning and business management will be of benefit to the TSR business. I made the decision to leave FRPG voluntarily -- it was time for me to tackle new challenges, as well as meet the needs of the organization.

Luke Peterschmidt and Ed Bolme are staying with their brands and will continue to manage them just as they have for the past year. The design contracts with AEG for ***L5R, LBS,*** and ***Doomtown*** are still in force, and work proceeds at the same pace that it has for the past four years. ***Rage*** is now being developed by Big Time Entertainment, a group Luke created before leaving the Pittsburgh area to assume his brand management job at FRPG, ensuring a smooth transition from his previous work on the game to the current state of the brand.

WotC is refocusing on its core strengths. Our customer support personnel and our organized play staff are all moving into the larger WotC service teams that provide those functions. That doesn't mean that WotC is going to "destroy" FRPG -- in most cases, WotC understands that it has quite a bit to learn from how we performed similar functions. I do expect the quality of that customer service to improve, simply from the added redundancy and focus.

Thanks for letting me correct the record!

by Phil Masters

*(Note: This article originally appeared, in very slightly different form, in **Shadis**, issue 18, in March 1995.)*

"Her Britannic Majesty's Secretary of State requests and requires in the Name of Her Majesty all those whom it may concern to allow the bearer to pass freely without let or hindrance, and to afford the bearer such assistance and protection as may be necessary."

One of the more enjoyable things about travelling on a British passport is the text on the inside front cover, quoted above, which has been known to scare junior officials witless. The vague sense that your government is prepared to send a gunboat to get even with any petty jobsworth who slows you down is nice, even if almost no-one takes it really seriously. But a roleplayer, contemplating such a document, ought to start thinking about this whole subject. Most campaigns seem to involve a certain amount of international travel, of one sort or another, and that activity is traditionally associated with border guards and minor officials demanding to see "your papers please." Paying some attention to where such "papers" come from is a small but useful way of increasing the sense of realism and detail in a campaign.

The Idea of a Passport

The idea of a standardized passport, as something that almost any citizen of a fairly free country can get hold of with a little routine paperwork, seems to be quite modern; it's hard to find any references to such things earlier than the 19th century. In ancient and medieval times, the usual assumption was that a nation and its rulers could do what they liked to any foreigner who ventured across their borders. They could certainly grant or refuse permission for such outsiders to enter their territory, and "passport" seems originally to have meant "entry permit" -- literally, "permission to pass through a port." However, this kind of thing creates inefficiency and difficulties in organizing trade, and even the most thuggish of kings can often be persuaded of the potential advantages of (taxable) commerce.

And so, gradually, nations came to agree that they would recognize and respect documents issued by other nations to their citizens. Still, this requires a level of bureaucratic efficiency rare until the last couple of centuries.

On the other hand, the more general idea of a set of documents that will get a traveler past guards at a border must be just as old as the idea of nations and rulers. In truly barbaric times, when any border guards are most likely illiterate, there may not be much point to passports, but once any sort of bureaucracy develops, travelers will need something that the bureaucrats can understand.

The best sort of "passport" to have, in most cases, is a letter from a powerful ruler or group, declaring that you are traveling on official business, and hence that your safety is a matter of national concern. The very best version of this is a letter from the local overlord, declaring you an honored guest; few bureaucrats will want to push their luck after seeing that. According to Marco Polo, his father and uncle, who had traveled to the court of Kublai Khan, were given a special "passport" by the Khan -- a tablet of gold, engraved with orders that they were to pass unmolested throughout the Mongol Empire. Kublai was sending them back to Europe to bring emissaries from the Pope, a mission of potential importance to the history of the world. And so the Polos traveled all the way from China to Europe (via the Middle East) and back -- although the Pope's envoys dropped out early on the return trip.

For all their legendary savagery, the Mongols maintained law and order throughout their lands, and also way-stations

for messengers and officials, to which the golden tablet presumably gave the Polo family access. PCs who could acquire such a permit before setting out on a journey would be fortunate indeed, but the chance should be fairly slim.

Almost as good as this sort of thing is a letter from your own government, appointing you as their representative. In modem times, diplomats receive considerable protection under international law, and can even claim immunity to local laws; in earlier eras, even the most arrogant of tyrants would usually treat emissaries from a neighboring lord with some care -- or at least would want to hear them out before maltreating them. (It didn't always work, of course; one stunningly stupid king of Burma allegedly executed a group of Mongol envoys for failing to remove their shoes quickly enough in his presence.)

One step down from that might be a letter from some noble or rich trader, vouching for your good name; not every local official or guard will trust such, but it's a whole lot better than nothing. By the "Age of Exploration," bold characters venturing in little-known regions might have a charter from some governmental or private research group (such as a university or "geographical society"), stating their mission. It's always wise to come prepared with a plausible story when wandering in unknown lands with survey equipment and maybe weapons, given the possibility of being taken for a spy.

Passports are still going strong, and computerized systems are giving them new features; in the near future, many may incorporate bar-codes or magnetic strips, carrying extensive personal information on the bearer (and making the passport harder to forge). On the other hand, they are a symbol of bureaucracy and obstructionism, and supra-national organizations like to talk about getting rid of them; the European Community, for example, is currently trying to open its frontiers up for all its members' citizens. In the future -- well, who knows? In a corporate-dominated cyberpunk world, an employers' ID card might be passport enough at whatever frontiers remains, while an interstellar space-opera campaign could involve high-tech identity systems marked with the user's DNA "signature."

Professional Papers

The medieval Muslim traveler Ibn Battuta, who covered 75,000 miles in his remarkable lifetime, faced a subtly different situation from the Polos, and could produce a different solution. Many (but by no means all) of his journeys were within the lands controlled by Islam, where national borders were not considered overwhelmingly important; being a Muslim was citizenship enough. However, local lords could still be suspicious of rootless wanderers, and there was the small matter of earning a living.

Fortunately, though, early in his career, Ibn Battuta had studied Muslim theology in the colleges of Damascus, in Syria, and there he had earned qualifications which enabled him to work as a religious teacher anywhere in the Muslim world. Islam teaches great respect for scholarship, and religious knowledge is especially regarded; it seems that Ibn Battuta was usually able to find work as a teacher, or as some kind of government official or advisor, in most of the Muslim lands he visited.

This opens up possibilities related to the less formal sorts of "letters of introduction" already mentioned. Anything that adds to a traveler's plausibility and backs up the story they might wish to tell an official is worth having. If such papers also help the wanderer earn a living, they are very useful indeed. For example, a license to practice as a physician, if it's recognized internationally, could be flourished to good effect. ("I wish to study the arts of healing in many lands. Furthermore, if your laws permit me to ply my trade, I am prepared to help the sick here, too.") ***GURPS Celtic Myth*** describes the Druid Order, a religious and scholarly body that enables characters of a priestly, philosophical, or poetical bent to wander at whim across a war-prone and "barbaric" land, receiving not only safe conduct, but also vast respect.

Of course, some countries are unhappy with the idea of penniless visitors wandering in, either to become a drain on local welfare schemes, or to take work away from the country's own citizens. Hence, one useful item of paperwork in many more sophisticated ages is proof of financial security -- say, a letter from your bank. Alternatively, a note from a local employer who is willing to take you on -- accompanied, if necessary, by permits to work in that land from the local government -- can be effective.

Some jobs give a character obvious reasons to travel; one of the best in modern-world games is "reporter." A Press Pass, combined with a plausible story, has been the excuse of choice in many a modern-day adventure plot. However, there are obviously two sides to this; reporters are notoriously nosy, so local officials may well pay them special attention. Occasionally, this attention may turn lethal.

Visas

A passport, in the modern sense, is a general identification document, issued by the bearer's home nation. Oftentimes, however, countries wish to control which foreigners come visiting them, and so they issue specific permits for this -- which are known as visas.

Visas are largely a modern phenomenon, although they closely resemble the original "passports"; they can only really exist if communications and bureaucracy are good enough for diplomats from the destination country to handle issuing them from embassies and such. They are also often slightly controversial, as they imply that the government demanding them feels some blanket distrust for foreigners, and they require a fair amount of extra work for officials and travelers alike. (Even the USA, which has often been more stringent about running a visa system than most countries, has relaxed its approach in recent years; many European nationals can now get into the country without visas, by filling in a short form on the spot.)

In an adventure plot, a visa requirement makes a useful way of foreshadowing elements of the situation that the travelers are about to get into. The mere fact that they need a visa will tell them that they are facing a bureaucratic, probably cautious, possibly paranoid government; a visit to an embassy or consulate to pick it up can suggest to them some of the country's concerns -- are the officials anxious for trade, say, or do they issue a lot of warnings against bringing "subversive literature" on the trip? Delays and obstruction at this point can also be a good way to slow the adventurers down, if the plot demands it.

Internal Passports

One good rule-of-thumb sign of a tyranny -- or at least an arrogant, autocratic government -- is that it controls travel inside its own borders, even for its own citizens. Such control must be administered, of course, and so the "internal passport" comes into being. Travel passes, made of wood, were required (for non-Samurai at least) in medieval Japan -- and were very hard to obtain for any purpose other than pilgrimages. The Ancient Egyptians also had such a scheme, and in modern times, Communist Russia and other, similar states have imposed similar systems.

Apart from enabling the government to monitor travelers and generally keep track of the population, a system of internal passports can be used to enforce "internal exile" as a form of punishment and restraint. Russian dissidents "sent to Siberia" were not always placed in prison camps; simply being forced to live in a remote industrial town in a sub-Arctic region, with no friendly visitors, could be control enough.

Foreigners (and native citizens of uncertain loyalty) may well be kept away from whole areas of a country, especially in modern, industrialized, militarist states. Sometimes, the reasons for this may be quite open: "We are sorry, comrade, but that town is the location of People's Tank Factory Number Seven, and you will understand that every nation is obliged to exert control over such things." On the other hand, sometimes a government won't want to even admit to the reason for the restriction -- which can make for an interesting mix of cerebral and "action" adventure, as curious visitors attempt to puzzle out What's Going On without being spotted as trouble and Dealt With (somehow) by the local authorities.

Of course, some authorities may not exert too much control over travel to some areas, to avoid inspiring suspicion --

but what limitations they do exert will then have to be very carefully judged. Espionage scenarios can get very subtle indeed at this point. In any case, "internal travel" papers of some kinds are not always the mark of a tyranny, and they can be very useful. Characters travelling around a country on official business may carry papers identifying them and their mission, especially if the country (or empire) is large and diverse, and communications are poor. Furthermore, many large nations and empires have been known to operate systems of shelters and hostelries for their officials, on the grounds that this is a cost-effective way of ensuring their efficiency and safety. (However, such shelters may be fairly sparse, with only a skeleton staff to maintain them.) Thus official travel papers may act as permits to claim free use of such places; perhaps even transportation, from a change of horses at a messenger relay station to free travel on trains. So remember, the next time your fantasy RPG PCs are hired by the Emperor of Blah to investigate strange doings on the borders, ask for a formal letter of appointment. It may well save you money as well as hassle from the Blah officials.

Complications

Entry Stamps: Many countries stamp the passports of visitors on entry. This has the practical advantage of helping them keep track of visitors, but from the visitor's point of view, it may have drawbacks. At the very least, nosy third parties who gain access to their passports can work out much about their recent movements; at worst, country "B" may be actively suspicious or even hostile towards anyone who has had anything to do with some enemy country "A." Thus, passports embellished with entry stamps, or with visas for that matter, may be a problem as well as a status symbol.

Proof of Identity: Countries that require their citizens to carry identity documents usually regard foreigners' passports as the equivalent. In such countries, the police are usually entitled to require any one they deal with to show their papers. It's generally a good idea to carry a passport on you at all times when traveling abroad; in this sort of country, it's a necessity. Of course, a passport can also be a useful "identity document" for all sorts of minor purposes.

Letting Go of a Passport: Sometimes, officials ask to hold on to characters' passports when the latter get into trouble, or merely when they (say) enter a controlled area, however legitimately. Most characters -- most people -- regard such requests with deep suspicion; this can lead to a few moments of interestingly tense roleplaying in a game. It's also worth remembering that people who are suspected of involvement in some kind of criminal behavior in their home country, but without enough evidence for them to be charged, or who are released on bail before a trial, may be required to surrender their passports "until the matter is resolved."

Game Considerations

Mostly, passports and paperwork are something that GMs can and should handle "on the fly," and in any case, it's possible to go too far with such things; few players enjoy spending hours roleplaying their way through red tape. However, it is sometimes possible and useful for matters relating to travel paperwork to show up on a character sheet. Point allocation systems such as ***GURPS*** or the ***Hero System*** often permit characters to spend points to obtain character "Advantages," and useful papers may qualify. This is to some extent a matter of taste and campaign style; in a game-world where everyone has a passport, or can obtain one very easily, it really isn't worth going to too much trouble over the topic. On the other hand, a "universal pass" such as the Polos carried shouldn't be handed out without something in the way of either game-world effort or game-mechanical cost.

In a game system with reaction modifier rules (such as ***GURPS***), "correct papers" are usually worth a bonus when rolling for official responses -- how much being up to the GM. (Or, to put it another way, incorrect papers lead to negative effects.) On the other hand, papers that show one to have been in an enemy nation recently will earn a penalty from both bureaucrats and patriotic types, and the former will also usually penalize anyone bearing invalid or incomplete papers. In fact, the passport may simply be the physical embodiment of what ***GURPS*** would term a Reputation. The ***Hero System*** treats possession of a passport as a 1-point perk, but something that most people can obtain with a little time and effort really shouldn't cost even that. One possibility is to regard this Perk as a long-duration passport with lots of long-term visas, vaccination certificates, and similar stamps and attached papers. It could also be something like a UN passport, which suggests that the bearer has some kind of semi-official status within this

major organization. "Diplomatic Immunity" in the same system costs 5 points; this should certainly include a diplomatic passport. "International Police Powers" have the same cost, and should carry a similar side-benefit. A Press Pass is valued at one point, and this may be a reasonable guide as to the fair point value for many other relatively minor "papers."

GURPS, on the other hand, doesn't generally charge points for transient things such as passports, but there are several ***GURPS*** Advantages that may be significant in deciding whether or not a character has a passport to hand, or how easily they can obtain one. Characters with high Status are usually more likely to have traveled abroad in the past, and high Wealth makes it easier to pay administration fees (or bribes); a low-status beggar will almost certainly not have a passport. If a character has Military Rank, they may, in some but all nations and periods, have been posted abroad -- which may have led to them being given a passport they can use at other times; the same sometimes goes for characters with Clerical Investment, and almost certainly applies to anyone with "international" Legal Enforcement Powers. ***GURPS Compendium I*** includes "Diplomatic Immunity" as a 20-point Advantage. This gives a character a high level of immunity to local laws, and certainly implies that they have a diplomatic passport. GMs should note, however, that this Advantage is always linked to a high-level Duty to the character's government (or a high-powered international body such as the UN), and that governments tend to get very, very annoyed with anyone embarrassing them by abusing this status. (In fact, they just might prefer to waive the claim to immunity in the case of a diplomatic who does something that they can't begin to justify or excuse. Alternatively, they might try the erring individual under their own laws.)

GMs wishing to assign ***GURPS*** points values to special papers such as those carried by the Polos or Ibn Battuta should base it on two factors; the Reaction Modifier they provide (if any), and any Social Status or other Advantages that they embody. A special document should be treated as a "Reputation" that affects a large group (usually "officials," or "citizens of a particular country"), with a special modifier; "only when the NPC sees the document". This would mean reducing the point value by 1/2, as the documents will often be out of sight, may get lost, and so on -- but if the PCs will usually be able (for a positive modifier) or forced (for a negative one) to show them to officials, this reduction should be dropped.

Thus the Polos' golden tablet could be called "+3 Reputation among loyal servants of Kublai Khan's Empire, only if the document is shown and read," for a total of +4 points (the reduction is definitely justified here, especially as not all Mongols may have been literate). A modern Diplomatic Passport might be worth +1 Reaction on 10 or less from all officials who see the document" (a large group), for +1 point -- as well as giving Diplomatic Immunity. Mostly, it's the Diplomatic Immunity that's important; officials have to respect that, like it or not. However, a few of them will snap to attention a notch faster when dealing with a foreigner waving a special passport around -- hence the + 1.

A licensed physician (with the skills to justify the status) pays no points for the license, but may pay for a level or so of status or wealth, and has access to a Comfortable job in most societies -- and the same goes for something like Ibn Battuta's qualifications as a Muslim scholar, although they were doubtless rarer in his society than medical qualifications in ours. In game terms, he would almost certainly have a small positive Reputation, at least among his fellow scholars.

Illegal Activity: Characters with forgery skills may wish to attempt to create bogus paperwork, and this is usually possible -- although governments naturally try to make it very difficult. Leaving aside questions of high-tech features such as magnetic strips (which could be the subject of an article in themselves), the problems include obtaining paper and the like resembling the real thing, which is often printed in intricate patterns; blank passports are usually guarded very carefully in the places where they are held (giving them a high value on the black market). Creating a fake passport that can stand up to extended investigation is very difficult indeed, as "the system" will usually use detailed records, duplicate pictures, cross-referenced serial numbers and the like. Hence, real-world criminals are more likely to use fraud or theft than forgery, or at least, to combine two or three of these techniques.

Apart from simply stealing a unfortunate traveler's papers and altering them as necessary (something that international travelers often have to be alert for), well-known tricks include adopting the identity of a person born at around the right time; bureaucracies may not cross-reference their records of births and deaths when issuing passports. (The thriller *The Day of the Jackal* brought this trick to widespread public notice.) Characters who are caught with

"incorrect papers," whatever the cause, from unsuccessful forgery to neglecting to bribe corrupt officials, can expect a fair amount of trouble -- how much, and for how long, depends on many different factors. It may simply be a question of taking a few minutes to "straighten things out" (legally or otherwise), or the lapse may lead characters to be arrested, placed under heavy guard by incorruptible officials, searched with great care, and then locked away for a lengthy period -- at which point, they are likely to start considering comparably illegal (or other) ways of getting out. The GM who thinks a little about PCs and their passports can find whole long-term scenarios developing.

by Steve Jackson

(Author's note: This article was originally written about ***INWO*****,** but the principle is equally applicable to any multi-player card game, such as ***Shadowfist.*** It's all psychological warfare.)

INWO is a game of wills and wits. In the end, you have to convince the other players to let you win. Even in a two-player game, if you can control what your opponent thinks, you can defeat him.

To win, you must control the actions of your rivals. To control someone's actions, you need to know what they want. Unfortunately, what your opponents want is to win . . . and to make you lose. This is where the deception comes in . . .

The key is to convince your foes that they're more likely to win *if they don't attack you.* This is obvious in a multi-player game, but it's true even in a two-player game. Sure, there are times when you want to provoke an attack. But not many! Basically, you want to direct your foes' efforts at each other -- or, if you have only one foe, toward attempts to grow, or ineffective attacks aimed at you, rather than *effective* attacks that actually hurt you. To repeat, because it's so obvious and so important: *You don't want them to attack you.* Even if all you do is delay the inevitable, you've bought more time to grow and to mature your own plans.

"That's obvious," you say. But **how**?" Just like real life . . . *any way that works.* Offer deals. Offer alliance. Offer bribes. Plead, grovel, bluster and threaten. Or just smile sweetly and let them wonder what they've overlooked. Here are a few specific techniques to get you started . . .

Honesty? Really?

Any multiple-player card game is (or should be) thoroughly backstabbing, but paradoxically, there can still be a place for honesty. If you're just not *good* at intrigue, don't try. Fight fair, keep your promises, and don't stab anybody. When people figure out that you *are* honest, they'll be more likely to make deals with you, and much more likely to keep those deals. (Even the most depraved player is a bit reluctant to stab someone who *always* keeps his own promises.) And every good deal puts you closer to a victory.

A Fine Whine

When someone really sticks it to you, try to make them feel guilty about it. Maybe you can get them to help you out later, either in the name of "justice" or of "balance." Yes, it's a scam. So what? Sometimes it works.

Let's You and Him Fight . . . Not!!!

A basic, obvious ploy is to stir your foes up against each other, pointing out weak spots or trying to assemble coalitions against strong players. Everybody does it, and everybody is looking out for it. So turn the tables. When somebody else is *obviously* trying to stir up trouble, act the peacemaker. Point out the **dis**advantages of an attack right then. If you do it right, you'll make points with the person who was going to be attacked . . . and maybe with the potential attacker. Best of all, you can put the would-be troublemaker in the position of playing up to you and trying to earn your goodwill so you won't make him

look bad again!

That's not to say, of course, that there's never a time for overt troublemaking. But it shouldn't be the only arrow in your quiver.

You Owe Me One

In the early part of the game, do little favors for your rivals. Maybe all of them; maybe just one or two who you think will be vulnerable to this ploy. A good way to do this without alienating anyone else is to help them make a key takeover from their own hand. If they're a bit short on Power, help them out with a spare token or two.

Later in the game, when it's getting tense, you can call in this favor when they really don't want to be reminded of it. "Come on! Don't help him attack me! Remember, I helped you get started! Just leave me alone this once, and we'll call it even."

Yes, it's whining. If it makes them do what you want, it's all part of the game. Of course, some people can look you in the eye and say "Tough." The term for these people is "winners."

The Berserker Ploy

If your opponents are *certain* you'll get even, they're less likely to attack you. Or if they do attack you, it will be an "open" attack rather than a broken deal.

How can you fill their hearts with fear? The best way is to pay back any injury . . . with compound interest. But act as though your counterattack is not really your choice . . . just the inexorable wheels of justice, grinding over them. After all, you don't want to make them a permanent enemy; you want them to learn their lesson and leave you alone in the future.

Not everyone can carry off this attitude, but when it works, it works.

An extreme measure is to "suicide" on a rival who hurts you badly, throwing everything into an attack or series of attacks to take them down with you. That does you no good in this game, but might build up some fear for the next one. (However, many people -- including, usually, me -- think that suicide attacks are a mark of the munchkin. If your play group won't stand for it, don't do it. If they think all's fair in cards and war, go kamikaze!)

Please and Thank You

And never underestimate the value of *asking nicely* for a small favor or a bit of help. Some opponents will enjoy it if you roleplay the "evil Illuminati" (or fanatic samurai lord, or whatever) - but others will roleplay back at you by *never budging an inch.* If you break the pattern by just saying "Please" when you need a bit of help, you might get it. (Yes, the real Illuminati work that way, too. Why do you think politicians smile so much?)

This works especially well for women in an otherwise male playing group. Hey, *of course* it's an unfair advantage. Take it and run! Subtlety is (usually) the key. For every male opponent who's been successfully distracted by a bold smile and a low neckline, a dozen have given away the game a piece at a time because, quite unconsciously, they were competing to see who could get a smile and a "thank you" from a lady who they would have sworn wasn't flirting at all.

In the end, it all comes down to psychology. The skill with which you play your cards must be matched by the skill with which you play your opponents. When you have mastered the game table, you can move on to . . . ahh, but I can say no more.

by Steve Hatherley

Roleplaying the strange world of the Illuminati is a bizarre experience where the characters are players in global conspiracies.

"Roleplaying ***INWO***" was largely inspired by ***Everway.*** I found that I loved ***Everway's*** character generation but wasn't inspired by its setting. ***INWO,*** on the other hand, doesn't even *have* characters, but has everything I could ever want from a background! The thought of what players would make of, say, George Bush, Goldfish Fanciers, South American Nazis, Clipper Chip and a Terrorist Nuke was enough to set my pulse racing. I'm sorry, but ***Everway*** just doesn't compare!

Note: ***GURPS Illuminati*** details everything you could possibly want to know about running a sensible conspiracy theory game. Unfortunately, ***INWO*** is too wild a beast.

Characters

Character creation uses the ***INWO*** cards to define characters and their conspiracies. As there are more than 500 ***INWO*** cards in print, it is best to give the players a small selection to choose from. Most cards will be groups, with a few interesting plots. These cards dictate the kind of game you will end up running. If you want to concentrate on criminal plots and government conspiracies, leave out the Cattle Mutilators, the Orbital Mind Control Lasers and Girlie Magazines.

Players choose five cards for their characters. Because an Illuminated game is a large step sideways from most roleplaying games, deal three cards to each player first. Hopefully those cards will start synapses firing and the players will start thinking about characters. If they don't like the cards they were dealt, let them choose others.

It helps if you explain what sort of characters you are expecting. For example, if they choose Vatican City and Sniper, tell them that you're not interested in a Catholic soldier, you want the Pope's personal hit man instead!

Asking the players to include difficulties and complexities for their character in their card selection provides hooks to tie into the plot at a later date. This sort of complexity might be someone you've made an enemy of, a group opposing your goals or whatever. A problem might be the Church of Elvis as an opposing organization or a Double-Cross as some kind of personal treachery. Or both.

Finally, character sheets and system statistics. Use whatever you are most comfortable with -- ***GURPS, Call of Cthulhu, Bunnies and Burrows.*** Whatever. I have not concentrated on numbers -- this is an article about style rather than mechanics.

A Sample Character: Doctor Bill Windsor

Dr. Windsor, an honest-to-god player character, was based on the following cards: Center for Disease Control, Clone Arrangers, Head in a Jar, Margaret Thatcher and Moonbase.

(Thanks Greg.)

Dr. Windsor works for the Center for Disease Control (CDC), in their Biohazard Level 6 department on the moon. His current mission is tracking an insidious genetic disease, a by-product of a cosmetic surgery virus.

This isn't strictly true, of course. The moonbase is actually a cover for the CDC's cloning organization set up by Margaret Thatcher when she was Prime Minister. Her clones are keeping her in power. Windsor's real job is clone-hunter and troubleshooter. He hunts rogue clones and shuts down rival cloning operations. He receives his missions from Control, a disembodied head floating in a tank of water.

His current mission concerns one of the other players who is a clone herself (and this fit just perfectly into her background). That player is investigating another clone, but not one of the CDC's. So who else is manufacturing clones? Windsor's mission is to find out and shut them down.

Plot

You have your characters. What are you going to do with them?

You can find your plot two ways. The first is to prepare something in advance, and put the characters through that. This may mean that the characters will need to focus on certain cards. An *X-Files* game requires that the characters work for the FBI.

Unfortunately, the biggest danger inherent with card-based backgrounds is that the characters are inevitably more interesting than any pre-defined plot. (Try fitting Dr. Windsor into a Bond-movie plot. Doesn't really work, does it?) As the players have been given the opportunity to create interesting characters, why not work with that and base the plot on the characters' backgrounds. This sounds intimidating, with assorted plots and groups all pulling in different directions, but it is surprising how plots often just fall into place.

Inspiration also comes from randomly drawing cards. For example, suppose you draw Princess Di and Rogue Boomer. Now, Princess Di is the head of the Voudonistas (one of the characters has her in his background) and it seems clear that she will be launching a brand new nuclear submarine and that her enemies want to steal it. That's a start, and when you look at the other characters' backgrounds, other pieces just fall into place. For example, tying Dr Windsor to the Diana/submarine plot suggests that a rogue cloning operation has been used to replace officers on board. And there lies the seed of a plot . . .

Starting the Game

Start the game any way you feel is appropriate, but I usually start the game in an all-night diner in Los Angeles at 3 a.m. That way, if all else fails and I cannot think of a plot, I can always throw the *Miracle Mile* situation at them. (*Miracle Mile* is a B-movie that puts Anthony Edwards into a glorious situation just perfect for the game. If you've not seen the film, I won't spoil it.)

Finding reasons for everyone to be in this diner may be contrived. Luckily, because this is a game of conspiracy, coincidences and contrivances happen everyday. Usually their backgrounds will suggest something: A meeting?

Surveillance? Following a suspect? An intercepted message? Luck? Or, most likely, all of them.

All that is then required is the catalyst, the trigger for the game to start. Something to bring all the characters (who, most likely, do not know each other) together so they can introduce themselves and start the game rolling. A W.I.T.C.H. pulling a .45 and plugging away at one of the characters, the diner's windows erupting in a hail of bullets, an earthquake, the start of *Pulp Fiction,* that sort of thing.

Apart from bringing the characters together, the start also needs enough clues to start the investigation rolling. A dead body to dissect, a briefcase to steal, a number to phone. Whatever it takes to get the players working in the direction you want them to go.

Running a Conspiracy

INWO is a strange experience. The players hold their own meetings and much of the time the gamemaster has less idea of what's going on than the players do! This is normal. ***INWO*** is about secret conspiracies and until the players trust each other, they form small, limited alliances. Initially at least, the carefully detailed plot takes second place to finding out what the others players are up to.

This does create a couple of headaches. One is pacing: when I start running ***INWO*** I have no idea how long the game will take. That is entirely in the hands of the players. Another is that I often don't know what the players have been telling each other -- so debriefings are often necessary.

Back to Saving the World

After a while all this player stuff becomes a little tiring. The plot is ticking along, and the players may need to be dragged back to it.

Scatter clues between the players. In order to get anywhere they will have to cooperate and share information. Clues can be anything -- cryptic e-mail messages, mysterious phone numbers, license plates, bullets. The players themselves may determine what clues are available by seeking them out.

Most characters will be controlled by someone who briefs them for their mission. This secret master can also hand out information and may tell their minion that a particular symbol is often used by, say, cattle mutilators. In other words, just enough information to keep the players moving.

Secret masters can also unite the players. For instance, they might say that another character is a Templar and it would be useful to learn more about their organization. The secret master may also direct characters away from sub-plots if they are in danger of being distracted. ("No. You may not investigate these stolen satellites. We have a team already working on that.")

However, players can develop a dependency on their master. Two methods discourage this. The first is that secret masters grow rather cross when pestered for information. It doesn't look good on their report, tell them. Players usually take the hint.

Second, secret masters are remarkably inefficient at handing out information that is easily available to another player. For example, fingerprint analysis is the sort of thing that secret masters ought to be able to arrange, but I always refuse if a character works for the FBI or has Local Police Department contacts. Fingerprints are their department.

More Plot! Need More Plot!

As the game progresses, you may discover that you need more information than you started with. As players lead you into alleys and along avenues you never even knew existed (let alone prepared) you need to develop more detail, more conspiracies, more plots.

There are two options. The first is that something sensible immediately springs to mind. The second is to turn to the cards. Each method has its advantages, although I personally prefer drawing cards --so often the plot spins off in new directions.

Here's a typical situation of how I use the cards: the players are concentrating on a W.I.T.C.H. assassin more than I expected them to. I told them that she was merely a hired gun, but they look for clues anyway. So I draw some cards -- and discover that W.I.T.C.H. are linked to Lenin's Body, Black Helicopters, and the Multinational Oil Companies. (I also drew State Lotteries and AMA, but they didn't seem appropriate so I ignored them.)

Well, that tells me that W.I.T.C.H. is after Lenin's Body. The Flat Earthers, an enemy pawn in the overall plot, have arranged for W.I.T.C.H. to steal some Apache helicopter gunships being transported by supertanker. (In return W.I.T.C.H. sent an assassin to kill one of the players, an enemy of the Flat Earthers.) The gunships will eventually be used to make an assault on Lenin's body!

Because I want to tie that to the characters, I decide that the helicopters are being delivered to the Klu Klux Klan. No, I don't know what the KKK have planned for them, nor do I know what the oil companies are doing with them in the first place. But I do know that one character belongs to the KKK, and if it is important I can always draw more cards.

The next task is to incorporate that into the story. Because one character is actively seeking the W.I.T.C.H., I let him intercept a cryptic message: "The Brent Spar Link delivers the KKK's black gifts at 5 a.m. Thursday." What he does with that is entirely up to him.

The Grand Finale

The climax of the campaign needs to be spectacular, dangerous and must wrap up the storyline. It may involve a cast of thousands and military precision, or it may be a lonely confrontation with an arch-villain in a secret polar base. (The Bond films make good starting points.)

Here's an example of how a finale might be worked up, calling in the strange and loose plot threads I've mentioned above. What we have so far is a nuclear submarine launched by Princess Di, a rogue cloning operation, some stolen helicopter gunships and Lenin's body. Among the enemy groups are the Flat Earthers (directly opposed to Di's Voudonistas) and W.I.T.C.H., although all W.I.T.C.H. really want is Lenin's body.

The Flat Earthers have replaced the submarine's command crew with clones. Stealing the boomer during the launching ceremony not only gives them a submarine bristling with nuclear missiles but is also a personal insult to Princess Di, their enemy. That much we've known from the start, when the characters were created. That's where the game has been directed, along the clone route.

Lenin's Body is just a side plot, but as it was never satisfactorily resolved during the game it needs mentioning during the climax. So it seems pretty obvious (ahem) that the body is currently on tour. The Princess will pay her respects to Lenin first, before the launch.

So, how do the Flat Earthers make it obvious that they have stolen the submarine, and what about the helicopter gunships? Returning to the cards for inspiration, Hallucinations and Lab Explosion start me thinking. (Before I chanced across them I was seriously looking for a use for the Albino Alligators!)

I decided that Lenin's Body was already aboard the submarine and that the corpse that Princess Di was to visit was a fake, a hallucination. Then, as the sub slips below the waves shortly after launch (definitely not part of the program) the gunships would perform a flyby (actually covering the theft). An explosion would wreck the Lenin's Body Tour Display to destroy the evidence and create a cloud in the shape of a ship sailing over the edge of the world - the Flat Earther's symbol, and another hallucination-type effect.

And what about the player characters? Perhaps they will smuggle themselves aboard the submarine and we can have a Crimson Tide type ending, or perhaps they'll find a use for that Robot Sea Monster they captured, or . . . who knows?

They'll be looking to mess it up somehow, but let them worry about that. That's what they're there for, after all!

Wrapping Up

Once you've had your climax you can relax, debrief your players (who will be clamoring to find out what was going on and who did what to whom, and why, and how) and take a break. You've probably earned it.

Time On Your Hands?

by Thomas Devine

The main problem in GMing a Timepiece/Stopwatch campaign for ***GURPS Time Travel*** is finding new places to go. Sure, you can travel to any age or epoch of history, but to do that you need either hours of library time or lots of ***GURPS*** sourcebooks.

Also, even though Timepiece wants to promote a just, egalitarian, and eco-aware society in the 22nd century, most of human history is of little obvious relevance for that job. True, many different cultures contributed to the modern world, but most of those contributions can't be attacked by Stopwatch for the same reason Timepiece won't risk messing them up, because they both need history to stay pretty much the same up to the 20th century, and even there both sides only want small changes. So here are ten useful changes for Timepiece. Each is something that would improve society, not transform it.

Save Will Rogers

Will Rogers was a powerful and well-loved voice in 1930s America. His death in 1936 was a serious blow to all those who worked for social justice. Had Rogers lived into his seventies his influence would have grown in importance.

Everything to do with cowboys and folksy Americana gained in popularity during World War II. Rogers, who was both a columnist and a movie star, would have had Demi-god status. This would have made his satires of politics even more powerful. Senator McCarthy would have been such a juicy target for Rogers. Rogers would have been able to lambast McCarthy without being called a Red. And if Rogers did get called before the committee and sent to jail, McCarthy would lose most of his support for jailing America's cowboy philosopher, a no-win trap. The chilling effects of McCarthyism on American life would have been reduced. It would be at least a 4% gain for Timepiece.

Challenge: Rogers and Wiley Post, the aviation promoter and an experienced arctic flyer who was famous for circumnavigating the globe in the far north, while taking Rogers to Point Barrow for publicity reasons, crashed in Northern Alaska because of engine failure. The challenges of saving them will be the Alaska wilderness and getting at the plane. The players would have to get friendly with Rogers, very easy, and then fool him, nearly impossible. The agents can't really hide their presence if they deal with anyone at all, for there were very few strangers in '30s Alaska. Stopwatch agents would have the same problems. The most useful skills would be: Survival(Arctic), Mechanics (Aircraft) TL6, and Language (Intuit).

Similar Mission: Dr. Charles Drew was the man who discovered how to separate plasma out of whole blood. He was injured in a car wreck and bled to death because the hospital admitted whites only. Getting Dr. Drew to a hospital that would have treated African- Americans would not only have furthered medical science but would have given the civil rights movement a living scientist/inventor as a symbol and role model. [*Editor's Note:* Sharp-eyed *Pyramid* readers have identified the story of the racist circumstances of Dr. Drew's death as an Urban Legend. More information can be found at http://www.urbanlegends.com/death/charles.drew/. Thanks, everybody.]

Research: Books on early 20th-century Alaska are rare but *Blazing Alaska's Trails*, by Alfred Huse Brooks, should be helpful. He was a head of the U.S. geological survey in Alaska. Also try *Alaska: A Bicentennial History* by William R. Hunt. Renting any of Rogers' films will help the GM portray him, *Judge Priest* is considered his best. *The Illiterate's Digest* and other books by Rogers will be useful too.

Change the Life of Mao Tse-Tung

There was nothing inevitable about the Communist takeover of China. Chairman Mao was simply the strongest warlord and the one who looked most like a "Righteous Emperor"

(someone who would rule with justice and bring prosperity). If Mao could have been removed from China at an early age, some other, probably right-wing, warlord would have come to power after World War II. This dictator would have probably been less moral than Mao but a forced alliance with the West, in order to keep the U.S.S.R. at bay, would probably moved China on a course like that of South Korea. China could be having semi-free elections by now.

If the player characters should get to the Mao family in the late 1880s, Mao, who was born in 1893, could be born an American citizen. In any case they would have to get Mao to leave China before 1911, the year he first took up arms for his nation. After that he was totally committed to Chinese politics.

Challenge: Mao's father was a self-made man and seemed to be self-centered, too. Getting him to let a relative or family friend take his son to the "Golden Mountain" (California) wouldn't be difficult if he trusted the person who wanted to take his son overseas. The best time to try to get Mao would be in 1906. Mao was thirteen and very unhappy with his family. The Chinese Empire was still in place and looked eternal to a peasant family like the Maos.

Stopwatch agents would probably try to make the Timepiece agents look like frauds or troublemakers. Convincing the local magistrate that the PCs are a threat could get everyone into a law court. The Chinese say, "When dead, stay out of Hell. When living, stay out of the law courts!" They might just try to assassinate the real Mao Tse-tung and replace him with an agent who would work to strengthen their hand. Language skills in Chinese(Hunan) and Chinese(Mandarin) will be needed. Social skills will be vital to winning over Mao's father and the young Mao himself. Martial Arts skills will be needed to fend off the inevitable Stopwatch hired tongs.

Similar Mission: Generalissimo Francisco Franco could be removed by Timepiece agents. If the agents disrupted his father's naval career (not a hard job -- he was already known as wasteful and frivolous), then Franco might not have been able to get a commission as an officer. Getting Franco involved in a scandal early in his military career could also hurt him. A 20th-century Spain without Franco would have probably seen a victory of the Spanish people over the aristocracy in the Spanish Civil war of the late 1930s. Just make sure that the Rock of Gibraltar (a strategically important naval base) stays out of Nazi hands during the Second World War.

Research: Jerome Ch'en's *Mao and the Chinese Revolution* is supposed to be the standard source on Mao's youth. *Mao* by Ross Terrill is considered the best overall biography. Gilbert Rosman edited *The Modernization of China*, a series of historical essays that cover the period 1840-1980. It should give insights and campaign hooks.

Stop the 1953 CIA Coup in Iran

This seems to violate the rules about not changing the 20th century too much, but the effects on the world at large would take a long time to be felt. The return to power of Mohammed Reze Shah Pahlavi in 1953 didn't seem to effect the world till the Iranian revolution started causing turmoil in the late '70s.

Ruholla Khomeini's raise to power came only because of the Shah's return. The Parliamentary government of Iran would never have exiled Khomeini or even connected phone lines to his seminary. He would have been a nuisance but not the dominate force in Iranian politics. Islamic fundamentalism would now be an obscure force without an agenda. Iran could even have gone toward democracy. This would be a 5% gain for Timepiece.

Challenge: Thwarting the plans of the CIA, MI6, the major petroleum companies, and the many local reactionaries and organized crime groups is hard work. With this many ruthless foes, who needs Stopwatch? But Stopwatch can get into the game easily: they only need to feed the locals the news that the players are interested in preserving the Majles(Iranian parliament), helping Mohammed Mosaddeq (the Iranian prime minister and patriot), and stopping the Shah. There are so many other groups that would do the rest.

The C.I.A. and MI6 are terrified that the Majles' nationalization of the oil industry in Iran might lead other nations to throw off other unequal treaties. They will remember anyone who thwarts them. If the player characters get a record here it will follow them. Timepiece's cover could be blown. Let the characters know this. The most needed skills would be the Thief/Spy skills, Combat skills, and Language (Farsi).

Similar Mission: There are many brutal coups in this century for the players to stop. Preventing Pinochet's rise to power in Chile would be a particularly good choice, since his nation had had such a proud history of democracy and social justice before he took over. But the 70's are after the divergence, which means you must change things in the '60s.

Research: There are many new works on the CIA in the cold war, *The CIA and American Democracy* is a good choice to give background for several interventions. *Iran Between Two Revolutions* by Ervand Abrahamian, covers the years 1905-1979, and *Iran: Crisis of Democracy* by Fakhreddin Azimi, covers the period up to the fall of Mosaddeq's government.

Extend Franklin Delano Roosevelt's Life to Cover the Negotiations at the End of World War II

Franklin Delano Roosevelt's (F.D.R.) final illness caused America to be represented by a dying man at Yalta and an inexperienced man at Potsdam. In spite of Truman's many virtues, the only advisor he trusted in foreign policy, a field Truman didn't know, was a military man who saw the world in only military terms. Joseph Stalin easily had the upper hand diplomatically.

But if you could get a TL8 doctor into the White House, FDR becomes a vital force at both key conferences. Stalin, faced by an energetic FDR, who might have let himself see more of Stalin's very real evil, would have had to make a few more concessions. Eastern Europe's history would have been far less brutal, and some nations, especially Czechoslovakia, might have stayed democracies in the same way Finland did. FDR would still have left the presidency to Truman. It is known that he wanted to retire for reasons of health. The Truman presidency would have had FDR's advice to aid the transition. This would be a 4% gain.

Challenge: Getting a doctor into the White House without Stopwatch having full details would be impossible. FDR's White House is one of the best and most reliably documented places in history. Everything you do will take place under the eyes of Stopwatch. Deep cover agents, "Sleepers," are your only hope. Stopwatch will also have deep cover agents, as will any other time traveling competitors.

Similar Mission: There are many people who could have used a doctor. Kipling could have lived to his mid-eighties if he had had his ulcers correctly diagnosed early on. The players could have saved the poor man years of pain, and would have aided the cause of Anglo-American friendship in the late thirties. Count Camillo Benso di Cavour, one of the founders of modern Italy, died at the age of 50. Prolonging his life would have given the Kingdom of Italy much more stable government in its first decades.,which would have made Mussolini's rise to power less likely. His condition would probably be easy for TL8 medicine to handle.

Research: Eleanor and Franklin by Joseph P. Lash will be a good book to skim; raid the notes and bibliography. It should give you some ideas on FDR's personal circle. *Churchill, Roosevelt, Stalin: The War They Waged, the Peace They Sought* , by Herbert Feis should tell enough about the post war conferences for your needs. David Brinkley's *Washington Goes to War* will be useful for setting up the details of everyday life in D.C. during wartime.

Get Amelia Earhart a Better Navigator

Amelia Earhart was a hero to tens of thousands of children. Many young women saw her as proof that they could pursue traditionally male roles and jobs, and she wanted that to happen. Extending her life would keep a soft-sell feminist as a popular heroine.

With Lindbergh's fade out in the early '40s, she would have been America's favorite flier during the Second World War. Millions of little girls would have emulated her, millions of little boys would have grown up with a free-spirited self-sufficient woman as a hero and later on as a romantic ideal -- a subconscious ideal, the strongest kind. Feminism would have seemed far less radical when it made its return in the '60s. At least a 3% gain for Timepiece.

Challenge: Careful social maneuvers would be needed. Amelia Earhart was a close friend to Eleanor Roosevelt and, like all of that circle, watched by Stopwatch. Also, the young Gore Vidal had a crush on her, as did his father. The elder Mr. Vidal was also famous and watched by the press. Anything the players do will be known.

Fred Noonan, Ms. Earhart's navigator, was a last-minute choice. George P. Putnam, Amelia's manager-husband, spent his all his time on publicity. He put little effort into preparing for the trip. Had he been more careful, he would have found that Noonan was a drunk. Ms. Earhart needed a navigator because, even though she was a good pilot, she was not a good navigator. Also the trip was very tiring and anyone would have needed a partner. Noonan drank so much on the trip that the last anyone saw of him was Amelia carrying him onto the plane slung over her back. Getting the players' choice of navigator to replace the drunk that Mrs. Earhart was saddled with might be easier than keeping him alive when Stopwatch moves to change things back.

Similar Mission" Virginia Woolf was a powerful voice for feminism at a time when feminism was temporarily forgotten. Stopping her suicide would clear the way for other women. The player characters would have to move around World War II England to stop the suicide. Have Stopwatch accuse them of being Nazi spies.

Research: Gore Vidal's *United States: Essays 1952-1992* has a lively essay on Mrs. Earhart, from the point of view of a boyhood crush. There are many books on the Earhart case, but read his essay on her first, it will keep things in perspective. George P. Putnam, Amelia's husband, wrote *Soaring Wings*, which is considered the standard biography. But considering when it was written and who wrote it, don't trust it too much.

Aid Upton Sinclair's Senate Bid

Upton Sinclair's run for office did much better than one might think, for an outsider with no major backing, no newspaper endorsements, and targeted by a massive smear campaign. In fact his margin of defeat was small for the period. If Timepiece could have got Sinclair a little help or kept a few bullies off his back, he could have won.

Sinclair was a novelist. His books, like *The Jungle*, an expose of the meat packing industry which ruined appetites for years, exposed corruption and hypocrisy. Because he constantly saw the ordinary people of the world kicked around to provide profits for the powerful, he became a radical. That would have meant that he never could have gotten to be a leader in the Senate and his legislation would not have been passed, but his ideas would have been heard and much of the fire drawn by the New Deal would have been aimed at Sinclair instead. The New Deal would have been seen as the middle of the road and FDR would have done even more. A Lewis win would be a 3% gain for Timepiece; a loss with Lewis' coattails broad enough to sweep a few more New Dealers into office would still be a bonus.

Challenge: Influencing a political campaign is hard, tricky work. Stopwatch would have to do little more than spy on the player characters and play silly pranks to turn much of the players' hard work to wasted time. Also there were many people in '30s California who would have been glad to kill Sinclair. The KKK was active in the south, oil men and movie moguls both feared Sinclair, and there were fascist organizations among the ranchers that openly supported Hitler throughout WWII! Stopwatch agents could get many of these people to do violence to Lewis or his campaign workers.

Similar Mission: Politics provides hundreds of things for players to do. Everything from swashbuckling rescues to dirty tricks to detective work could be required of the characters in the same adventure. Often a well placed practical

joke could embarrass a politician and wreck a campaign, normally the one the players are working for. It can work the other way too, but Timepiece seems to work mainly for the underdogs of history, so it will not work as well.

Research: The EPIC Plan for California by Upton Sinclair, gives the goals of the campaign. *Rivers of Empire* by Donald Worster and *Cadillac Desert* both give political background for the early 20th-century American West. Upton Sinclair also wrote an autobiography. ***GURPS Illuminati*** and ***GURPS Cliffhangers*** both can help you run this intervention. Also rent a tape of the movie *Chinatown*, it will give tons of period detail, and the villain will be perfect. The only flaw is that he is so much sweeter than the real plutocrats of that time.

Get Patton the Job of Marching to Berlin

The choice of Gen. Bernard Law Montgomery, over Gen. George Smith Patton, to march to Berlin was purely political, in the worst sense. Montgomery was incompetent and WWII dragged on. Millions of lives could have been saved, the post-war politics of Europe made more democratic, and Joseph Stalin's Russia less powerful in the post-war period, if Patton had led the march to Berlin. A 4% gain for Timepiece.

Challenge: The infighting over who would invade Germany was bitter, and kept out of sight. The British military establishment and aristocracy did not want Europe liberated, and Britain saved, by a Yank. They needed to have one of their own do it. The argument that Patton could get the job done sooner and thus save millions of lives would mean nothing to these people, even if you could prove it, because their need is irrational. No reason can change their minds; but not all argument is rational. Tons of social skills and Charisma will be needed to win this fight. Savoir-faire Skills in British Aristocracy, British Military and British Civil Service would all be needed., plus similar skills for the Americans and French. It might be wiser to have the players guard a highly skilled diplomat with Empathy, Intuition, and Charisma +5! With all these proud officers, the first hint of scandal or even a rude prank can ruin everything, and Stopwatch knows that.

Similar Mission: Getting the right person in a bureaucratic job, rather than the guy the insiders want, can be a subtle and effective way to change history. The right civil engineers could have prevented the Johnstown flood. The right clerk at the Supreme Court, and the illegal internment of Japanese-Americans might not have occurred. The right officers on the western front and those newfangled tanks would have been used to break the German lines. Careful time shapers love bureaucrats!

Research: There is a whole genre of books on what the world would have been like if only the Allies had done this or tried that. *Nineteen Forty Three: The Victory that Never Was* by John Grigg, is a good example.

Stop the Parnell - O'Shea Romance

Charles Stewart Parnell nearly won Ireland Home Rule in the late 1880s. If Parnell's romance with Kathrine O'Shea, the wife of William Henry O'Shea, one of Parnell's supporters, had never become public, then he might have been able to keep the support of the British Nonconformists (non-Church of England Protestants). Without the Nonconformists, William Ewart Gladstone (a major 19th-century Prime Minister of the U.K.) could not keep his Liberal party in office. This led to a Conservative domination of U.K. politics. This domination caused many people to glorify radical social change and violent revolution. This is the period when Marxism and early forms of Fascism became ideological fashions.

The reactionary policies that the British government followed in Ireland led to a new kind of nationalism based in a politics of resentment. After the 1916 Easter rebellion, when the Irish declared a republic and the British Navy fired on Dublin, the repressions that were used to break Irish nationalism, under the guise of punishing treason, destroyed much of the British government's moral authority. The political writings that came out of this mood of frustration and shame became the backbone of the ideology of the Third World\Non-Aligned Movement. The hopelessness and violence of Ireland, in the years 1916-1921, and the internal civil war they had to fight in the '20s, has been the source for the kind of Third World nationalism which justifies tyranny in the name of preserving national identity and independence. Prevent Parnell from being named in the O'Shea divorce and Ireland and the U.K. miss 30 years of bitterness.

Challenge: To prevent the Parnell-O'Shea romance you must make sure that both Parnell and Kathrine "Kitty" O'Shea are busy elsewhere. This is matchmaking, an art which can shoot back and forth between pleasant and deadly without Stopwatch trying to kill you. Social skills will make or break you in this scenario. The formality of the high Victorians is proverbial. Any slips and you're in disgrace. Stopwatch will try to saddle the player-characters with scandal. Read a French farce of the 19th century for ideas.

There were many violent secret societies in late Victorian Ireland. One society, the Invincibles, assassinated Lord Frederick Cavendish, the Liberal Chief Secretary of Ireland, in Dublin's Phoenix Park, on May 6th 1881. These assassination clubs could be a great cover for Stopwatch. Accusing Timepiece agents of being linked to such a group could get them jailed. Thief/Spy and Martial Arts skills and good lawyers would be needed to counter these ploys. English was the language spoken by all the principals in this area. Irish Gaelic was a political cause in this period -- Irish patriots would learn it. French and German were very fashionable, particularly French, which was the mark of an upperclass education, and necessary for passing as an upperclass person. Latin, Greek, and German, marked you as a scholar.

Similar Mission: Preventing the Phoenix Park slayings would also aid in preventing a lot of bitterness. It could even achieve the same goals as above. Persuading the British East India company not to forbid Anglo-Indians, people of mixed British and Indian parentage, from becoming commissioned officers would be a start towards reducing the bigotries of the British Raj (colonial rule of India). If the Indian army and civil service had been open to people of Indian decent from the early 19th century on, then India's independence would have been less disruptive, her democracy surer, and her post WWII diplomatic stance more pro-Western. Most of the Third-World has followed the examples of Ireland and India: change the example and change the outcomes.

Research: The Fall of Parnell, 1890-91 and *Charles Stewart Parnell* both by F.S.L. Lyons, should cover Parnell himself, the works are considered standard. Lord Eversley's *Gladstone and Ireland: the Irish Policy of Parliament, 1854-94* and Joseph Lee's *The Modernization of Irish Society, 1848-1918*, should give the broad background.

Get Congress to Declare Mother Jones' Birthday a National Holiday

We use holidays to define those things that are so important we must never forget them. That's why commemorating the life of the most popular hero of the labor movement is such a winning idea. Mary Harris "Mother" Jones lived for a full century, and she spent 70 years of that century fighting for social justice, child welfare, and the rights of the working men and women of this nation. Because her life is dramatic, and she is such an appealing figure, having schoolchildren taught about her will lead them to admire her. Some of her values would be in the minds of future generations, teaching them that fighting the powerful for social justice is as American as apple pie. Success would be a 3% gain.

Challenge: There are few people in history that could be more totally disgusting to the Stopwatch crowd. Mother Jones is the kind of person they want everyone to forget. Their agents will always line up opposition against the values Mother Jones fought for, and they will never lack allies among the locals. This means that the players will never know if they are fighting Stopwatch or just profoundly motivated locals. Even today there are senators that would look on commemorating her birthday as treason, and the players will need to work in the '30s for the best effect. Once again, the Social and Thief/Spy skills will be needed.

Similar Mission: This fight is about memory. In the real world, people change the past by forgetting it, and what is forgotten becomes a little unreal. The slavetraders forgot the high civilizations of Africa, the English forgot how much the scholars of Ireland and Wales had taught them, and the conqueror writes the history books and makes himself the innocent hero. But if the players can get the other side of the story into the history books, then the values of future generations can be changed. This sort of thing can make for interesting campaigning with the players trying to maintain covers as respectable schoolbook authors and publishers while Stopwatch tries to bury them in scandal.

Research: Mother Jones wrote an autobiography, but *Labor in America: A History* by Foster R. Dulles will be more use in figuring out where to go and who to influence. *Corporate Crime and Violence* covers a later period, but might provide villains and victims.

Persuade President Woodrow Wilson to Live with Henry Cabot Lodge's Insults and Get the U.S. Into the League of Nations

America's failure to enter the League of nations promoted both Isolationism in the U.S. and the idea that democracy was a less effective form of government. These ideas aided both the Nazis and Japanese militarists. Also, it helped link American Anti-Communism with the belief that our civil liberties were a threat to our national security. Even the Stalinists benefited, because objections to their oppression carried no weight on the left. Having America join the League of Nations would not have prevented WWII, but it would have improved the worldwide reputation of democracy at a key time in history and encouraged more people to respect it in actions as well as words. A gain of 5% for Timepiece.

Challenge: What kept America out of the League of Nations was the squalid infighting between Woodrow Wilson and Henry Cabot Lodge. Both men saw themselves as true defenders of American freedoms, and the other as an interloper from an unworthy part of the nation with corrupt ideals. Luckily the players only have to get those two to tolerate each other for a little while.

Senator Lodge, a conservative New England Republican, saw Wilson as a vain Southerner lost in dangerous idealism, but might have accepted the League as a necessary evil, if it was labeled as such. His 14 objections were a clear slap at Wilson's "14 principles" and the chosen label. President Wilson, as a progressive Southern Democrat, saw Lodge as a would be aristocrat, smug in his wealth and inherited position. Also, Southerners in this period tended to see wealthy Northeasterners as controlling the banks and out to humiliate the South. Letting Lodge have his 14 objections would not have affected the League much, if any, but it would have seemed like a major humiliation and defeat to Wilson.

Wilson is the main problem here. His upbringing would have trained him not to respect the opinions of those he considered to be less than his equals. The notion that Lodge's insults were unimportant would be something he just could not swallow. Stopwatch would have the easy job again. With all these hot tempers and fragile egos any insult, rumor, or prank, could make the players jobs impossible.

Similar Mission: The petty squabbles of the powerful have cost the world a lot of bloodshed. On the Stopwatch side of things, petty infighting among the powerful, because it promotes violence and authoritarian government, would almost always benefit them. Think about it!

Research: Woodrow Wilson and the American Diplomatic Tradition by Lloyd E. Ambrosis covers the infighting on this debate. He might be a little too kind toward Lodge. There are other books, only the recent ones deal with ethnic factors and most treat the Irish as demons.

More Knightmare Chess Variants

Knightmare Chess players continue to submit ideas for variant games. Here are some of the best we've received over the last year . . .

Card Buying

The players start without cards. All the cards are in a single deck, face-down.

Turn three cards face up.

After each turn, the moving player receives 2 (or 3) points (which accumulate over turns). The player may then purchase a single face-up card by paying its point value. This card goes into your own hand, and one more card is turned up. Or you may pay 1 point to discard any card.

You may not play a card on the turn you buy it, and you may not buy more than one card per turn. You may, if you like, buy a card and pay for a discard on the same turn.

You are limited to a five-card hand, regardless of how many points you are holding.

For balance, white should get no points on his first turn.

-- *Geoff Hopcroft,* hopcraft@ecs.umass.edu

Give-Away Knightmare Chess

The object is to lose all of your pieces. The King may be captured just like any other piece (and the Checkmate Rule is moot). The "Vendetta"-effect is in force throughout the game (if you have a legal capture, you have to make a capture). The actual "Vendetta" card becomes "Anti-Vendetta," a regular card (instead of a Continuing Effect) with this text:

Make a legal, non-capturing Move, even if you have a capture available.
Play this card on your move, instead of making a regular move.

-- *J. Hunter Johnson,* jhunterj@io.com

Bidding

This variant works best if each player has his own set of cards. It removes the last bit of luck from the game, but the results are still unpredictable!

The players have free choice over the cards in the deck they play with and the order in which they appear in the deck, as with the Stacked Deck rule by Rich Shipley. In that game the top five cards in your deck will be your opening hand.

The players bid with the top card(s) in your deck for who gets to be white. The decks are placed on the table face down and each player turns the top card over at the same time. This card is discarded for game purposes but can still be brought back by "Legacy." The player who discarded the highest value card gets to choose which color to be. If both cards are the same value, each turns a second card over, and so on until players bid different card values.

Then each takes the top five cards from their deck and play begins as normal.

A player who really wishes to be white will bid a high card . . . which will be fine unless his opponent also really wants white (because they both have nasty opening moves planned). At that point they will both end up throwing away their opening attack cards.

Similarly, if neither player cares about being white, they may each discard "Doomsayer" and then be forced to throw away the next card in their deck. The point is, if you stack a deck in a way that guarantees a certain card in your opening hand, you may have to discard it in this bidding round. Not a nice thing to happen.

Of course, this could be applied to a non-stacked deck game, but then it merely adds to the luck factor.

-- *Richard Forster,* acp95128@strath.ac.uk

Chicken!

(Note that this can be combined with other variants!)

The 150 points for a deck is now the maximum rather than the set value. The players do not reveal the value of their deck before the game starts. They may, if they choose, reveal the points value during the game, once the decks are set, for psychological purposes!

Each player builds his deck by whatever rules are chosen (stacked or shuffled) and the game begins.

The point value comes into effect only in the event of a stalemate . . . when the player with the cheapest deck claims victory.

The "Truce" card can still be played, but any stalemate reached with that effect in play doesn't count and the game proceeds as normal under the "Truce" rules. (Otherwise you just put "Truce" and "Fog of War" in your deck and hope your opponent doesn't have "Vendetta" and "Peace Talks.")

A stalemate win in this kind of situation counts for a half win if playing a "first to three games is the winner" game series.

-- *Richard Forster,* acp95128@strath.ac.uk

One Hand

Each player chooses a hand of five cards or 40 points, whichever is more. There is no draw deck . . . the starting hand is all you get. You may not choose any cards that cancel other cards, that cancel moves, that expose or interfere with your opponent's hand, or that prevent the free play of his cards.

This gives a game with long stretches of normality and an occasional strategic interference with the rules.

-- *Steve Jackson,* sj@io.com

By Mike Montesa

"Good evening, autoduel fans! This is Mad Mike coming to you live from Japan via the World Sports Network's satellite link-up. We're glad you tuned in today to catch the first ever live autoduel broadcast from the Tokyo Imperial Autoduel Arena! What!? You thought there was no autoduelling in Japan? The streets are too small for duelling cars? Think again! The Japanese absolutely love autoduelling!"

Last year the Japan Autoduel Association Emperor's Cup competition drew 125,000 spectators and had a whopping 34% overnight TV rating, beating out baseball and combat sumo. And of course, there's Amateur Night. Autoduelling is the one sport in Japan that doesn't require a lengthy apprenticeship or training.

But Japanese autoduelling is different from stateside duels. The development of autoduelling in Japan has some unique influences leading to the situation today. Japan, a country with nearly half the population of the U.S and livable land the size of California, has never been an "automotive" culture. The reasons for this date back to the end of the second World War. After the war, most populated areas of Japan found themselves leveled. Rebuilding was undertaken in an unplanned and haphazard manner, resulting in cities where the road networks were spiderwebs of narrow, twisting streets and alleys. There are, of course, a few long, straight and wide highways and roads, but the majority of roadways in Japan are barely wide enough to drive a car through. Most streets have no names and having an address is no guarantee that you'll find the place you're looking for.

This situation was not too detrimental in the immediate post-war years. Japan's populace needed efficient public transportation and most people couldn't afford a car. The train and subway systems were developed and today are among the best in the world. The road situation, on the other hand, was a nightmare.

When Japan's economy boomed and Japan became an economic powerhouse, more people began buying cars. The roads were never designed to handle so much traffic, and traffic jams tens of kilometers long became commonplace. Driving a car somewhere often took longer than riding the train.

In Japan, cars are considered more to be luxury items than necessities. In the U.S, you have to have a car just to get around, but in Japan you don't. Still, many people want to have a car despite the lack of space and severe costs. Japanese car owners pay well over $1,000 just to get a license. Parking spaces can cost anywhere from $400 to $700 a month. The yearly mandatory safety inspections can cost up to $1,000, all for procedures that most Americans do themselves (changing the oil, spark plugs, etc.) Yet even with these restrictive costs, people continue buying cars.

Autoduelling in Japan was banned until just a few years ago. Most Japanese autoduel fans had to watch U.S. duels via satellite. A few *bosozoku* (motorcycle gangs) tried a few impromptu duels in the streets, but were unsuccessful in generating any interest (mostly because of innocent bystander casualties). Basically, there just wasn't any space to build an autoduel arena. Then came the Great Quake of 2009.

Large areas of Tokyo were inundated by Tokyo Bay after the earthquake. Those areas left standing were abandoned. But, as many soon found out, these empty streets proved perfect for Japanese-style autoduelling. At first, the police cracked down on the autoduellists, but after the Marunouchi Riots, autoduelling had become so popular that the deserted downtown area was walled off, and duelling was allowed in the new arena. Sponsorship came from the big Japanese auto makers, and soon the Japan Autoduel Association was formed.

The Tokyo Imperial Autoduel Arena is unlike any other arena in the world. Since it is simply a walled-off part of Old Tokyo, no changes were necessary beyond adding press bunkers and installing cameras in various places among the ruins. Driving these streets is a unique challenge. Most are barely wide enough for one car, and 90° turns are common.

Japanese autoduel cars are small, with engine size rarely over 2000ccs. Active suspensions, ABS brakes and other high-performance options are necessities. Generally, Japanese Mini-cars mount one or two weapons max, and are not too heavily armored. But these cars can take these corners at speeds no larger vehicle could ever hope to.

Foreign drivers have only recently begun to make inroads into the JADA. The system of hiring foreign drivers in Japan is more like the free-agent system used in baseball. Since Japanese autoduelling teams are very close knit, it is not easy for foreign drivers to carve a niche for themselves. There are many cultural differences to overcome, and driving the unique Japanese autoduel cars in the Japanese arena sends many aspiring foreign drivers back home with their tails between their legs. Some however, have made quite a splash. J. J "Ratsmoker" Thomas won an upset victory over the Japanese favorite last year, causing officials to tighten restrictions on foreign drivers. "If he didn't want to burn, he shoulda had an extinguisher," Thomas shrugged after the championship.

It takes nerves of steel, and maybe a head full of rocks, to strap into one of these go-carts. But the action is fast and furious. If you've got the drive and the guts, you too can take a crack at the Japanese circuit.

Japanese Mini-Car Design Restrictions

Japanese mini-cars favor speed and maneuverability over firepower. In the twisting streets of the Imperial Arena; you've got to move fast and turn quick. Armor tends to be thickest in the front and rear, and on the bottom. In a close chase, with an enemy on your tail, a mine dropper or similar weapon is very deadly as there is nowhere to go except straight over the mines.

Weapons are mounted front and rear, and turrets are uncommon for all the weight and space they take up. It is difficult to get a side shot unless you are on a wide street or are taking a crossing shot. With often only split seconds to take a shot, hi-res targeting computers are a necessity.

Despite the dangers of dropped weapons, most drivers go for a rear shot since once you get on someone's tail, it is very difficult for them to shake you. In escaping, the key is speed. Take a corner faster than your opponent can and he's likely to end up going through a wall.

Body Size
Body size is limited to compact and sub-compact only. Mid-sized bodies may be used, but are classified as mini-vans.

Armor
Metal armor is illegal. All other types are allowed.

Modifications
All body modifications are allowed.

Chassis & Suspension
Off-road suspension is illegal. All other modifications are allowed.

Power Plant
Whatever you can fit under the hood. The Japanese love gasoline engines. They're real crowd-pleasers when they blow.

Tires
All types allowed.

Weapons
Weapons are limited to types that do 2d (+ mods) damage. One-shot weapons that do more than 2d are legal. This makes weapons like the Vulcan very popular. If you can imagine a 20mm Vulcan jammed inside an eight-foot mini-car, you'll understand why Japanese drivers are so crazed.

Accessories

The Japanese love lots of useless gadgets and decorations in their cars. Anything goes, including more useful and lethal gadgetry. Kamibombs are crowd favorites!

A Note on Collisions

During play, you'll find that many vehicles will be trying to negotiate very sharp turns on very narrow streets. When making such turns, the edge of the vehicle counter may touch a wall or curb. This does not count as a collision unless the actual depiction of the vehicle itself touches the obstacle. Fishtails and skids resulting from failed Control Rolls will often result in another collision as the vehicle swings back to hit the other side of the street. Japanese duellists become very proficient at eyeballing where to begin their turns; starting one a fraction of a second early or late can spell the difference between a trip to the Winner's Circle and the cemetery.

Mini-Car Teams

*"OK, we're back and with me tonight is our special guest, last year's champion **gaijin** driver, Mark "Warchild" Scurlock. Nice to have you on the show, Warchild, and it's great to see you out of therapy!"*

"Wha . . . ?"

"Tonight we'll be seeing a rematch of last week's team competition between the Roppongi Banana Boyz and the Shinjuku Metal Army. It looks like a real grudge match tonight doesn't it, Warchild?"

"Uh . . . yeah, that's right Mike. I'll think we'll probably see at least one kill tonight, following Kengo "Flipstick" Takamura's big meltdown last week. SMA's anchor driver is looking for payback."

"Right. That was his brother he lost in that wreck wasn't it?"

"Affirmative, Mike. Losing Flipstick and the gas engine in Gojira ACE was a major setback for the team. Too bad there wasn't anything left to save."

"You mean of Flipstick?"

"No, the engine!"

"Oh, okay . . .Warchild, you drove a gas guzzler here last year. How do they stack up in Tokyo?"

"Just fine. They cost a bit if they blow, but what the hell, it ain't my money! That's what sponsors are for right?"

"Of course. Speaking of which, how do you think Keihin's Hot Legion will do tonight?"

"Hmph! They oughtta go back to hosing out the pits! If I had that crew working for me, I'd just set the car on fire and save everyone some time and ammunition. Forget about it!"

"You're still upset about last year's semi-finals, when Keihin pulled out as your sponsor just before the opening heat?"

"GRRRRRRRR!"

Getting It Together

An autoduel team in Japan is much like its American counterpart. There is a manager, his staff, a team of drivers and a support staff. In Japan, however, the team is not owned by an owner backed by a sponsor. The team is owned by the sponsor.

The drivers on Japanese teams benefit from the stability of the system. A well-trained and cohesive unit can give a

driver that extra edge he needs to win. The expense accounts and other perks are also quite good.

But "losing your ride" in Japan can mean that not only you, but the whole team is out of a job. Disgruntled sponsors are well-known for firing entire teams if they perform badly, then bringing in a whole new crew and simply changing the team name.

And speaking of team names, Japanese autoduel teams have some of the craziest names you've ever heard. Famous teams like the aforementioned Roppongi Banana Boyz and Shinjuku Metal Army share the limelight with others like Big Rhino Noise (a mostly foreign team) and Funky Daruma Style.

Buying Your Team

You have $50,000 to build as many cars (or bikes) as you can using the Mini-car design restrictions. You also have an additional $10,000 which can only be used to buy body armor and spare parts (tires, engines, etc.).

Vehicles are matched in duels by cost, just like in the States, but the Japanese divisions are different:

Class 1 - $7,499 or less.

Class 2 - $7,500 - $12,499.

Class 3 - $12,500 - $17,499.

Class 4 - $17,500 - $22,499.

Class 5 - $22,500 - $27,499.

Class 6 - $27,500 or more.

Now you need a team of drivers and gunners. You automatically have one driver for each car and a gunner for each car that needs one. You also get a chief mechanic. Make these using the character generation rules in the ***Car Wars Compendium.*** Backup drivers and gunners may be hired for $500 each (payable with the spare parts money only).

Once your team enters the arena, its fate lies in the hands of the drivers. Drivers rack up Prestige points for themselves and for the team as a whole. A driver with -5 points or less is cut from the team. A team with -15 points is fired! This means everyone, including the race queens. A new team takes over using the same vehicles. Roll up new characters.

Your team is out of play when:

1. It is fired.

2. You can no longer put vehicles in the arena.

3. All your drivers are dead.

Between tournament rounds you may repair your vehicles, hire or fire crew members and wreck the karaoke bars!

Team Names

Go ahead and get crazy with this. The only rule is that team names are always made up of three words, and they don't have to make sense (although they might in some weird abstract way).

Tournaments

Japanese tournaments are a series of seven heats, one heat for each class, and a final open heat. If a team has a vehicle

of the right class for a heat, only that vehicle may be used. If a team does not have any vehicles of the right class for a heat, it may use any combination of vehicles as long as the total value doesn't exceed the limit for that class. This often results in teams running two, three or even four vehicles in the Class 6 heat.

In the final, open heat, each team chooses one vehicle and its best driver, and sets them loose on each other.

The tournament winner is the team with the most wins. How do you win a heat? Simple. Destroy the enemy vehicles or render them immobile. Forcing an enemy to retreat to the pits is also a win.

Awards
The overall winning team receives the *Yusho,* the grand prize. This prize is worth $50,000. Other typical awards are:

Ginosho: for the highest speed attained while taking a corner of more than °45.

Kinboshi: for an upset win over a higher-classed vehicle.

Kantosho: for fighting spirit (awarded at players' discretion)

Shukunsho: outstanding performance (number of kills)

Each of these awards is worth $10,000, except the Kinboshi. This award is worth the value of the more expensive vehicle.

Sample Vehicles

Widowmaker - Class 1, Sub-compact, hvy. chassis, std. suspension, large power plant, 4 HD tires, driver, 1 HR front linked to bumper trigger, ramplate, SD rear. Armor: F20, R10, L10, B20, T5, U10. Safety seat. Accel. 5, top speed 98.5, HC 3; 2,435 lbs., $4,505.

Pandemonium Fencer - Class 2, Sub-compact, x-hvy. chassis, hvy. suspension, 100 cid engine w/tubular headers and turbocharger, 3-gallon duelling tank, 4 PR radial tires, ABS brakes, driver, VMG front, SD rear, FOD rear. Armor: F20, R18, L18, B20, T10, U14. Portable fire extinguisher. Accel. 10/15 w/turbocharger, top speed 92.5, HC 5, 2,715 lbs., $12,366.

Rice Burner - Class 3, Mid-size (counts as mini-van), x-hvy. chassis dual axle, six wheels, hvy. suspension, large power plant, 6 PR tires, HD brakes driver, safety seat, HDFT front, MD rear. Armor: F45, R30, L30, B45, T25, U25. Fire extinguisher. Accel. 5. top speed 95.5, HC3, 5,525 lbs., $12,750.

Pandemonium Fencer II - Class 4, Compact, x-hvy chassis, active hvy. suspension, 150 cid engine, 4-gallon duelling tank, 4 HD steel-belted radial tires, ABS brakes, driver, roll cage, safety seat, RL front, 2 HR rear. Armor: F40, R35, L35, B40, T15, U15. Air dam, spoiler, hi-res SWC (RL). Accel. 10, top speed 121, HC 5(6), 3,770 lbs, $20,565.

Tokyo Imperial Arena Map

Shaded areas represent buildings of 1 to 4 stories in height and have 6 to 20 DPs, with the majority of the buildings being 12 DP structures. The area with the JADA logo is an open courtyard with the logo painted on the ground.

Combatants usually start in one of the corners and then proceed into the maze of streets.

It is possible to circle the arena maze on the outside track, waiting for an opening, but this is seen as cowardice and is frowned upon by most drivers and wildly booed by the fans. Cameras are mounted on every corner and a sky-cam hovers over the arena for aerial shots.

Map

by David Pulver

Both cops wore smart blue Kevlar vests and carried shock sticks and holstered Glocks. One was overweight and pushing 40; her face was red from climbing the stairs. The other was an uncertain-looking rookie, his youthful good looks only slightly spoiled by acne. Still, kind of cute, Mara decided.

"Dr. Mara Omokage?" the fat cop puffed, staring down at her.

"Is this about the parking ticket?" Mara said coolly. She adjusted her kimono, wishing she'd had time to put on makeup. They were only police, but she was as fastidious as a cat. "If so, bother my attorney."

The cop fingered her stick. "Don't give me any lip, lady. We're shutting down your little clinic. Under the Uniform Code of Criminal and Civil Justice, I place you under arrest for unlicensed genetic surgery and tax law violations."

"I don't think so," Mara said.

The cop activated her stick. Sparks crackled from the tip. "Make my day, bitch. You gene hackers think just because you're rich as all damn, you're different -"

Mara grinned, wide. Then wider. Her jaw snapped out like an egg-eating snake, then it retracted. The female cop's body hit the floor with a wet thump. Mara spat out a chunk of esophagus, turned her smile on the trembling, blood-spattered rookie.

*"She was right - we **are** different." As the shocked rookie stared, Mara's waist-length hair drifted out, coiling around the rookie's Glock. "You won't need this, little boy . . ."*

*But the cop was no longer looking at her. He was looking at the **thing** that had slithered in behind her.*

Mara turned, glanced over her shoulder.

"Don't worry, copper," she said. "It's just one of my babies."

Writing ***GURPS Bio-Tech*** was a very dynamic experience. I was blessed with an exceptional group of enthusiastic playtesters, including some real-world experts in biotechnology. One problem: we kept thinking the book was finished, only to see yet another new breakthrough making the news - tissue engineering, artificial chromosomes, post-embryonic cloning. Heck, ***Bio-Tech*** is likely the only game supplement held back for a rewrite due to the birth of a sheep!

A criticism of my previous ***Ultra-Tech*** books was that they didn't explain enough of the science and technology *behind* the gadgetry. ***Bio-Tech*** takes a very different approach - it's a sourcebook rather than a catalog, that begins by detailing today's developments in the field, and then builds on them to suggest how they could be extrapolated into the future.

Bio-Tech covers the genetic engineering of humans, plants, animals and microorganisms, as well as cloning and other reproductive technology, transplants, organic body modifications, nanotechnology, braintaping, cryonics, industrial bio-tech and biological warfare. Left out were cybernetics, medicine, inorganic nano and drugs - but these kinds of "bio-tech" are extensively dealt with in ***Ultra-Tech*** and, especially, ***Ultra-Tech 2.*** Actually, the one thing I regret not being able to fit in this book were rules on magical biotechnology.

Biological Magic

Fertility magic is nearly as old as humanity itself; wizards in fantasy literature are forever brewing up strange creatures

in their vats, and fairy godmothers often bestow gifts or curses on unborn children. And in a technomagic setting, who knows what strange hybrids the combination of biotechnology and sorcery could spawn? What are gengineers like in the worlds of ***GURPS Voodoo*** or ***CthulhuPunk*****?** Dr. Mara Omokage knows . . .

The spells described here can form the arsenal of any mage who specializes in bio-magic. The colleges they belong to are:

Body Control: Accelerate Pregnancy, Ease Labor, Remove Fetus, Transfer Pregnancy, Warp Fetus.

Enchantment: Create Chimera, Spellgraft.

Healing: Ease Labor, Remove Fetus, Sense Disease.

Knowledge: Analyze Genetics, Genomancy.

Necromancy: Hellspawn.

Technology: Manipulate DNA, Sense Nano, Sequence DNA.

The spells in the technology college are unlikely to appear before TL7, but you never know . . .

Accelerate Pregnancy
Regular

This spell speeds the safe development of an unborn baby.

Cost: 20 to double rate of development, plus 10 more for each additional doubling of speed. Thus, a baby developing at 16 x speed (50 to cast) would come to term in only two weeks.

Time to cast: 20 seconds.

Prerequisites: Ease Labor and Haste.

Item: Wand, staff or jewelry, only usable by a mage. Energy cost to create: 1,000.

Alter Nanovirus
Regular

This spell alters the nature of a particular nanovirus (see ***GURPS Bio-Tech***) that is either dormant (e.g., stored in a vial) or is within a host but has not yet finished transforming its subject. Each casting allows the mage to add or subtract one advantage or option from the virus.

Cost: (T-8) x 10, where T is the higher of 9 or the minimum TL required to add that option or ability to a nanovirus.

Prerequisites: Sense Nano, Manipulate DNA.

Item: Wand, staff, jewelry or nano-manipulating and imaging system like scanning tunneling microscope, only usable by a mage. Energy cost to create: 1,500.

Analyze Genetics
Information

This allows the mage to ask a question regarding the genetic heredity of the subject, within the limits of his knowledge of genetics. For example, a TL1-3 mage could ask "is he a son of King Richard" or "will this mare pass on the blood

sickness to her foals?" and get a true answer; a TL7 mage could get answers equivalent to those available from a DNA test.

Cost: 3.

Prerequisites: Sense Life and (at TL6+) Genetics-12+.

Item: Silver pin or (at TL6+) microscope. Energy cost to create: 500.

Create Chimera (VH)
Enchantment

This spell must be cast on a test tube or other container holding genetically distinct early embryos from different species. It magically mixes the cells, obtaining a blastocyst that will develop into a single organism if surgically inserted into an artificial womb or surrogate host mother. The organism's physiology will be a mixture of the species as selected by the caster, with appropriate advantages and disadvantages (if desired, use the rules for Chimera in ***GURPS Bio-Tech***).

Modifiers to skill roll: 0 if very close cross (e.g., wolf- dog), -3 if closely related (e.g., ape-human, sheep-goat or tiger-lion), -6 for distant hybrids (e.g., fox-human or alligator-viper), -8 for radical hybrids (e.g., crocodile-bat or human-hummingbird). Add +4 if trying to duplicate a previous success using the same mix, -4 if mixing three species, -8 if mixing four, -12 if mixing five, etc.

Success means a viable chimera forms but (especially if the caster got very ambitious) it will not be perfect: the GM should give it several unplanned disadvantages. Critical success means an excellent mix of advantageous traits and mild disadvantages. Failure means the organism dies within 3d hours. On a critical failure the creator gets something that appears to be viable enough to carry to term, but it will be stillborn or be born horribly deformed.

A success, critical success or critical failure still requires that the caster be able to implant the blastocyst in an appropriate host who can carry it to term (GM's discretion) - see the rules in ***GURPS Bio-Tech*** for surrogate mothers and artificial wombs.

Cost: 20 per embryo in the fusion.

Prerequisites: Alter Body, Analyze Genetics, Enchant.

Ease Labor
Regular

Cast on a mother who has gone into labor, this spell eases the pains and ensures a relatively trouble-free birth. If using the rules for birth in the *Surrogate Mother* sidebar in ***GURPS Bio-Tech*** it gives a +2 on HT rolls to avoid problems if maintained for the duration of labor, or +1 if maintained only for the last half.

Duration: 1 hour.

Cost: 4 to cast, 2 to maintain.

Time to cast: 6 seconds.

Prerequisites: Lend Health, Resist Pain.

Item: Staff or wand, usable by mage only, must touch subject. Energy cost to create: 500.

Hellspawn

Regular; Resisted by mother's IQ

Conjures a malign demonic spirit to replace the soul of a developing embryo (before it has become a fetus). The result will usually be born as a demonic familiar if conjured into a non-sapient animal, or a cursed half-demon (give the character lots of Occult and Paranormal Disadvantages) if a sapient race.

Critical failure may conjure a real demon outside the mother's body, or accidentally summon some other entity to possess the developing fetus - maybe an angel?

Cost: 20.

Time to cast: 5 minutes.

Prerequisites: Permanent Possession, Summon Demon.

Manipulate DNA (VH)
Regular

Lets the caster magically splice genes and manipulate DNA to produce specific traits. Successful use of it gives the caster a +10 to Genetics (Genetic Engineering) skill at the working model stage of genetic engineering (see Chapter 2 of ***Bio-Tech***). This bonus adds to other modifiers in the genetic engineering rules; the spell also allows working with improvised facilities (e.g., a kitchen) at a -10 "lab quality" penalty (which exactly cancels the +10 bonus the spell provides for no net modifier). Only one try is allowed per weekly attempt at genetic engineering; the GM should roll secretly for success.

Cost: 8.

Duration: 1 week.

Time to Cast: 5 minutes.

Prerequisites: Analyze Genetics, Apportation, Small Vision and Magery 2+.

Personal Divination
Information

Genomancy is divination by examining the pattern of introns in someone's DNA. A blood sample is required.

Prerequisites: Analyze Genetics, 2 Healing and 2 Body Control spells.

Remove Fetus
Regular; Resisted by mother's HT

Cast on a pregnant mother, this spell allows the mage to reach *through* the mother's belly and into her womb and safely detach the fetus. If the fetus is old enough to survive (or can be rapidly transferred to an artificial womb or incubator) this is effectively a painless alternative to Caesarean birth. Otherwise, it serves as a means of abortion.

Cost: 3

Time to cast: 3 seconds.

Prerequisites: Ease Labor, Minor Healing.

Item: Gloves. Energy cost to create: 400.

Sense Disease
Information; Area

Tells the caster if the area is dangerously contaminated with contagious disease particles (viruses, bacteria, etc.). Caster can also specify he is looking for a particular type of biological agent.

Base Cost: 1/3 (minimum 1).

Prerequisite: Sense Life.

Item: Staff, wand or jewelry. Energy cost to create: 100.

Sense Nano
Information; Area

Tells the caster if there are any nanomachines in the subject area, and gives a general impression (on a good roll) of what kind. Caster can also specify he is looking for a specific type of nanomachine, or even a named brand he is familiar with.

Base Cost: 1.

Prerequisites: Seek Machine, Small Vision.

Item: Staff, wand or jewelry. Energy cost to create: 120.

Sequence DNA (VH)
Information

This spell allows the caster to magically determine the correct DNA sequences needed to produce specific traits. Successful use of this skill gives the caster a +10 to Genetics (Genetic Engineering) skill at the concept stage of genetic engineering (see Chapter 2 of ***GURPS Bio-Tech***). Only one try is allowed per week; the GM should roll secretly for success.

Duration: 1 week.

Cost: 6.

Time to Cast: 5 minutes.

Prerequisites: Genomancy and Magery 2+.

Item: None.

Spellgraft (VH)
Enchantment

This gives an unborn child inherent magical ability. This spell is thus a favorite of genetic engineers, fairy godmothers and pagan deities.

A spellgraft can be made using any spell known to the caster at skill-15 or better that has a magic item listed for it. When the child is born, it will gain the knack (see ***Magic***, p. 96) of casting that spell without having to have either

Magery or the prerequisites.

Only one try is allowed to give a child a particular knack. A critical failure gives the child a cursed or twisted knack (the GM should decide whether this is a reduced-cost advantage or a disadvantage) of some sort.

Cost: Half the energy cost of an equivalent magic-item creation, but can only be cast on a developing fetus.

Prerequisite: Enchant, one spell from each of 10 different colleges.

Transfer Pregnancy
Regular; Resisted by HT

This spell transfers an embryo or fetus from the mother to the mage's own womb, or from the mage to another female's womb. At greater energy cost, the spell can transfer to a male, creating an artificial pocket womb, although any birth must be through Caesarean section, this spell or the Remove Fetus spell.

The subject of the spell (not the fetus or embryo) resists, whether the baby is being transferred to or from them.

Cost: 4 for an embryo, double for a fetus. Triple energy cost if person receiving the fetus is male.

Prerequisites: Remove Fetus and Magery 2+.

Item: Wand, staff or jewelry, must touch subject, usable only by a mage. Energy cost to create: 1,600.

Warp Fetus
Regular; Resisted by mother's HT

If cast on a developing embryo or fetus, it will be born deformed. The child will be born with 10 points of disadvantages (caster's choice) for every energy point put into the spell. Only disadvantages that could be biologically hereditary are possible, e.g., Epilepsy or One Arm is allowed, while Pacifism or Reputation are not. Disadvantages may include racial, occult or paranormal disadvantages, but these cost double, i.e., 1 energy point per 5 points of disadvantages granted.

Cost: variable

Time to cast: 10 seconds.

Prerequisite: Alter Body, Strike Barren.

Item: Staff, wand or jewelry. Energy cost to create: 2,000. Usable only by mage.

Call of Computer: A Paranoia Adventure with a Cthulhu Mythos Background

by Joshua Marquart

GM Background

In 1925, Old Reckoning, those with special sight slept with horrible dreams. Some went insane, others followed their dreams. The cause of these dreams is dead, waiting under water, dreaming. Its name is Cthulhu, and it has slept in the island R'lyeh since before Man. In 1925, R'lyeh rose and sank in the Pacific waves. These 368 years later, R'lyeh rises again.

Last monthcycle, Bud-Y-BOY-2, a Computer Phreak, was shoved into the concrete by a passing group of High Programmer Kath-U-LHU-6's bodyguards. Bud-Y began to think of how to get back at Kath-U-LHU-6 for having such uppity guards. Something *better* than Fizz-Wizz in his showerhead. And he found it.

Doze-NOW!, an experimental Sleepy-Tyme drug replacement, was deemed unsafe by CHZ R&AMPD. Following "The Computer's Official Toxic Disposal" methods, R&AMPD deposited the Doze-NOW! into the food vats of sector CHZ. The drug, when consumed in combination with the other hazardous wastes, caused many of the already psychically inclined populace of CHZ to become extra sensitive. Many woke screaming from horrible dreams because Cthulhu invaded their sleep and guided them. Bud-Y intercepted a warning E-Mail to Kath-U-LHU-6 to evacuate CHZ sector. Since Kath-U didn't receive this message, he and his entourage fell victim to the drug's nightmare effects.

Cthulhu contacted Kath-U-LHU-6 through dreams, and coaxed Kath-U-LHU-6 to recreate his cult and free Cthulhu from imprisonment on R'lyeh. A powerful member of the Illuminati society, Kath-U-LHU-6 got his hands on more Doze-NOW! and distributed it to every food vat in Alpha Complex. It took little effort to manipulate and "weed out" other Illuminati members who were having nightmares.

Kath-U and his followers created a secret society that may be the downfall of Alpha Complex. Their goal is to free Cthulhu and rule the world. To do this, they must acquire the Necronomicon. Shub Nigg-U-RTH-3, another Illuminati, has uncovered this plan, but every Troubleshooting team is busy under Friend Computer's orders, shooting clones who wake up screaming because they are obviously mutants. All except one Troubleshooter team. Too bad Hast-U-RRR-4 has already acquired them as a team for his own purposes. Shub's guards, the Mee-G-O, are going to have to intercept them. That's where the players come in. They're the team.

Private Player Info

Besides personal effects and job-related items, each Troubleshooter carries the following equipment: Laser Pistol, 2 Red Laser Barrels, Wristcom Unit I, Red Jumpsuit w/Pouches, Red Reflec Armor, Knife.

Eld-R-SGN: Registered Matter Eater. He has stolen a Disintegration Gun which he labeled as a harmless, experimental Teleport Gun. In actuality, it *is* a Teleport Gun. It teleports anything it hits to a random location of the GM's choice. Pow-R-NGR-1 was teleported to R'lyeh and will show up at the end of the adventure. R'lyeh is a good place to teleport things.

Pete-R-VKM: He's an INTSEC plant. His "3 Yellow Barrels" are actually red, painted yellow. Spen-G-LER is in R&AMPD.

Pow-R-NGR: He looks like he is a Power Ranger because he wishes to be robotic. His flashlight requires 2 "D"

batteries.

Gibb-R-ING: He is a member of the Cult of Kath-U-LHU. He was only recruited recently, and knows absolutely nothing about the cult, other than it's mostly ex-Illuminati. Kath-U-LHU-6 won't even acknowledge his existence.

Herb-R-WST: He has been having the same dreams Gibb-R-ING had. Four of his pamphlets are Communist Propaganda at 5. He also has Machine Empathy.

Henry-R-MTG: Registered Precognition. He carries 12 unlabeled grenades. When he uses one, roll 1d20 on the following table:

Roll 1d20:

1-2	Explodes in hand, re-roll type, ignore 1-2.
3-4	Dud
5-7	Tangler Grenade = Glop will erupt from this grenade and splatter up to 4 targets like a tangler.
8-10	Regular grenade, 8P
11-13	Gauss grenade, 9F, Robots only.
14-16	Smoke grenade = No one can see target without infrared. Everyone gets -10 penalty to shoot into and out of smoke. Radius: 20 Meters.
17-19	Napalm Grenade, 7F
20	Tac-Nuke, 30F. Throw hard! Radius 80M.

Adventure Summary

1. Mission Alert: "Where's Viv-R-INN?" Receive Mission Alert for Hast-U-RRR. Get escorted to briefing by Mee-G-O's.
2. The Briefing: "Infrared Goat" Pagan Rituals around an altar and get briefed on mission by Shub Nigg-U-RTH-3.
3. NGR PLC: "Go, Go, Pow-R-NGR!" Meet the workers of NGR PLC, receive regular equipment and Jackobot.
4. GBI R&AMPD: "Who You Gonna Call?" Ride an exploding bus to R&AMPD, receive experimental equipment.
5. The Mission:
    1. Acquire Mark IX technology and introduce BIACIS.
    2. Arrive at RKM and get lost in the sewers.
    3. Arrive at Cult and disrupt ceremonies.
    4. Go through a Rift and exit to Massachusetts
    5. Land on R'lyeh, meet Cthulhu, and summon Mark IX.
6. The Debriefing: "Whatchoo talkin' 'bout?" Meet Hast-U-RRR and Hastur.

The Adventure

All italicized text should be read aloud to the players at the appropriate time.

1) Mission Alert: "Where's Viv-R-INN?"
Yawn. It's been very tiring in Alpha Complex lately, and it isn't because of overwork. Everyone just hasn't been getting enough sleep. Clones wake up screaming. It keeps you awake and frightens you. But it's not the screaming that frightens you most, it's all those laser blasts into the dark by the Troubleshooters on duty to make sure that anyone who wakes up screaming dies.

Originally, everyone believed that the problem was something every clone ate before they went to sleep, but The Computer determined that those who wake up screaming are part of an insidious Communist plot, and The Computer is always right. Those who question Its judgment are assigned to reactor shield duty. Sometimes those who wake up

screaming get away, but there also those who just disappear. And no clones come to replace them. Some say they were clone-napped, but that could be a rumor, and rumors are treason punishable by summary execution.

*The six of you are strewn about GOO Troubleshooter HQ lounge taking turns watching **Teela O'Malley** re-runs and the Troubleshooter mission monitors. Each of you has been popping Wake'em-Ups, the pill of choice for those who've been on monitor duty for 18 hours straight.*

What isn't a rumor is that the entire headquarters is void of other Troubleshooters. They weren't taken away in their sleep, right? They're all out on missions, right? There's nothing wrong with this, right? You all just haven't been sent out on any missions lately, probably because they need people to watch monitors at the headquarters, right? Isn't that it? It's not because the Computer mistrusts you, is it? No, it couldn't be, could it?

Look up as though you'd like an answer to these questions.

I mean, could it be, is it true, that you aren't sent on missions because there's a traitor in your midst?

Wait for responses. Then, after any fights and replacements have arrived, or during battle, The Computer speaks.

All of the monitors flash the message "Incoming mission!" at the same time that all the hidden speakers in the room scream "Attention GOO sector Troubleshooters! Mission alert warning! Observe Com Unit I printer readouts for information! Thank you for your cooperation!"

The printouts read:

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MISSION ALERT
Codename: MULYSA
Code Number: 2309sdipi24
WHAT JOY, TROUBLESHOOTERS! YOU HAVE BEEN
SELECTED FROM A MULTITUDE OF OTHER
TROUBLESHOOTER TEAMS TO PARTICIPATE IN A
MISSION OF GREAT IMPORTANCE AND MINIMAL
DANGER. REPORT IMMEDIATELY TO SECTOR HPL,
BRIEFING ROOM 568327238A. BRIEFING
OFFICERS DUNWI-TCH-3 AND HIGH PROGRAMMER
HAST-U-RRR-4 WILL BRIEF YOU. DO NOT PASS
THROUGH GHO SECTOR. NOT GOING DIRECTLY
TO YOUR BRIEFING ROOM IS TREASON SUBJECT TO SUMMARY EXECUTION.
```

The Troubleshooter team has no idea where the briefing room is. HPL sector doesn't appear on maps and no one knows where it could be. The Computer does not give out any information because the information is not available at their Security Clearances. If they request an escort or wait too long, send a troop of ARMY clones to get them. The Computer says: "Troubleshooters, you are late for your briefing. I have sent a crack team of green ARMY clones to solve this problem."

The ARMY troopers are Shub Nigg-U-RTH's guard, known as the Mee-G-O, warriors because their names are alike except for the origin sector: Mee-G-OOO, -OOH,

-OHO, -OOW, etc. The Mee-G-O warriors are your typical ARMY troopers, except they dress in a green reflec with strange curves and odd points which cause disturbing shadows over the body. When they speak, it is a buzzing sound as though talking through a kazoo or into a fan. Each trooper carries a scabbarded sword, laser rifle and a foreboding metal canister which they shake when making a point. The metal canisters don't do anything, but if a clone dies, a Mee-G-O will cut the dead clone's brain out with his sword and place it in the canister. Sick secret society initiation ritual. Yeah, that's it.

Mee-G-O**

Objective: Get the Troubleshooters to their briefing room
Mutant Power: Adrenalin Control
Secret Society: Trekkers

S4 A5 C3 D6 E7 MA9 M3 P7
Macho: 3**Wounds:** 5**HTH:** 2
Skills: Melee Weapons: 7, Intimidation: 8, Laser Weapons: 7
Equipment: Green Reflec Armor (4L), Laser Rifle (9L), Sword (8B)
Tactics: Talk in buzzing voices. Get PCs to their briefing room as quickly and uncomfortably as possible. Acquire dead or live brains, cutting them out with swords.

2) The Briefing: "Infrared Goat"
Once the Mee-G-O have the group surrounded on all sides, they march down the corridors to sector HPL. HPL is a very run down and nerve-racking sector. Screams echo down the corridors. The lighting is very bad - what few lights were ever installed down here are now mostly broken. Most of the corridors lead directly to Alpha Complex's sewer system, and, dare I say it, the Dungeon, where mutant monstrosities of all types lurk in the shadows! The Mee-G-Os hustle the Troubleshooters down a dark maze of hallways to one particular unlit corridor. Mee-G-OHO-3 claps his hands together in an odd sequence and the lights come on, revealing a bright green door at the end of the corridor.

One of the guards knocks on the door. A slit opens at the top of the door, and then closes. The guard then pushes the door open, and the darkness of the room beyond does its best to escape. "Go forward to the one who waits, and line up on the red line," says Mee-G-OHO-3. Mee-G-O won't hesitate shooting clones who don't listen, but they'll hear out strange explanations.

You enter a very dark and foreboding briefing room. The room's walls are made of a hard substance that is not your typical Alpha Complex Plasti-steel. It looks more like concrete yet dark, like the whole room is done in varying shades of Infrared. The only illumination comes from two long flares which stand on either side of a tall desk, all of which sit atop a raised platform. Next to the desk are two clones, one in a suit of mixed yellow, orange and red, the other in orange, wearing a black mask with big, red eyes painted on it. On the wall behind them is a marquee sign, and a door is in the left wall. In front of the platform is a short, red line. There is only room on the line for five clones.

Once everyone's established: the tri-colored clone is staring at the group. The door closes behind the Troubleshooters and two Mee-G-O guards stand in front of it, blocking escape.

The GM may want to stand up on a table and say this: The clone introduces himself, "I am Noah-Y-ESS-3, high avatar of Shub Nigg-U-RTH-3 and Briefing Coordinator. This is Briefing Secretary Nyarloth-O-TEP-2. You must summon your briefing officer. Recite the chant and dance around this briefing altar!"

"Yes, and *frolic*!" adds Nyarloth-O-TEP. The marquee begins displaying words.

Hand out a copy of the following phrase to each player:

"Ia, Ia, Shub Nigg-U-RTH, Infrared High Programmer of Alpha Complex with a Thousand Clones!"

For fun, make the players run around the table chanting with Nyarloth-O and Noah-Y goading them on.

When everyone's done being silly, a mist appears behind the desk, and it slowly takes form, enveloping the entire desk and the area around it. Out of this mist steps a black clothed person. Nyarloth-O-TEP screams. Laser shots don't affect him. Anyone who shoots is fired upon by Nyarloth-O, No-Y, Mee-G-OHH, and Mi-G-HOH.

The Infrared waves his arms and the black cape whirls behind him, revealing shining black armor with ribbon-like patterns of white from the neck, like tentacles from his mouth. The clone pushes back his hood, revealing a head encased in white reflec armor. His entire body glistens in the light, as do the walls. He is obviously a High Programmer.

When Shub Nigg-U-RTH speaks, talk in a deep voice. "I am High Programmer Shub Nigg-U-RTH-3! You have all been selected to perform in a dangerous mission of great importance to Your Friend the Computer. Do any of you have anything to say before I continue?" His unblinking eyes stare sternly for an answer. Nyarloth-O-TEP puts on a different mask and takes notes. If any PCs mention they are in the wrong briefing room, have the Mee-G-Os shoot

them. If any try to show the mission Report, have Noah-Y-ESS look at it, and then order shot the person who handed it to him because showing a mission alert to anyone but the recipient is treason.

Shub continues, "Your mission, Trouble-shooters, is to stop a renegade secret society from destroying all Alpha Complexian life as we know it. This evil mutant society is known as the 'Cult of Citizen Kath-U-LHU.' They've been taking clones from their beds and controlling their minds."

Noah-Y-ESS continues, "On your mission, you will first report to NGR PLC for general equipment distribution. Tell them your mission codename. Second, you will go to GHQ R&AMPD for experimental equipment assignment. From R&AMPD, you will invade the headquarters of the Cult from the staging point in sector RKM, destroy everyone inside, and capture their leader, Kath-U-LHU-6. Your Communications Officer should contact us via his Com Unit once you arrive in RKM. We will be temporarily breveting you to Orange Clearance for this mission. Are there any questions?" Answer questions. "Then go forth and serve the Computer, Troubleshooters. Pick up your brevets on the way out." Shub vanishes in another cloud of mist.

As the clones depart, the Team Leader is handed six moist Orange Brevets (arm straps) from a Mee-G-O at the door. When they dry, 1d6 of them will change color back to their original Red.

3) NGR PLC: "Go, Go, Pow-R-NGR!"
Allow the PCs time to go off and get into trouble on their own, unless you're in a big hurry or don't like the idea of watching your players make fools of themselves. (And if you don't, why are you playing this game?)

NGR PLC is run by a robot and six Yellow citizens. Their supervisor, Zord-U-NNE-3, has granted one promotion to the citizens, and has elected the robot, Beta-6, to decide which clone will advance to green. One of the workers, Bill-Y-NGR-2 is a Pro Tech-er who found out about the promotion. Being the scheming sort, and a bit of a prankster, he told the other five workers of the promotion and gave each of them a "personality switch" which, when pressed in its 3-foot range, will change Beta-6's personality to their own. Bill-Y has an override which he'll use when Zord-U-NNE-3 asks for Beta-6's opinion. Here are the workers. Each wears a "Hello, my name is:" name tag:
Beta-6: Android with a cyclopean head wearing a large, red chest plate with an electrical symbol on it. Normally an agreeable personality, his catch-phrase in each personality is "Ay-yi-yi!"

Bill-Y-NGR-2: Pro Tech. Will sit back, laugh, and override Beta-6 when Zord-U-NNE-3 calls.

Tomm-Y-NGR-2: Frankenstein Destroyer. His override will cause Beta-6 to beat himself up.

Kimberl-Y-NGR-5: Corpore Metallica. She knows Pow-R-NGR and wears silver paint. Her override will cause Beta-6 to use phrases like "Clone garbage" and "fleshlings."

Rock-Y-NGR-1: Communists. His override causes Beta-6 to spout Communist Doctrine, causing Communist Propaganda checks.

Trin-Y-NGR-3: Politiclones: Her override makes Beta-6 take the personality of such famous politiclones as Ron-Y-RGN, Newt-G-RCH, George-B-USH, and Abel-I-NCN.

Kate-Y-NGR-4: Assembler of God. She overrides Beta-6 with prayers and evangelistic speech.

Upon arriving at PLC, the Troubleshooters will enter the building to wait on line. During this time, they'll see the yellow workers and observe Beta-6's changing personality. When the Troubleshooters give their mission code, various clones will walk behind the android, changing his personality. Allow Beta-6 to mention everyone's excitement over the new upcoming promotion. Once the Troubleshooters become frustrated enough, Zord-U-NNE will call in.

A large blue glow appears behind Beta-6. A disembodied head floats in it. "Hello Beta-6," says the head. "What is your verdict?" At this point Bill-Y presses his override. "Oh great Zord-U-NNE-3, the new leader of the NRG PLC will be . . . Bill-Y-NGR-2." "WHAT?" scream the other five clones. They go ballistic, attacking Bill-Y and anyone else with hand-to-hand attacks and screaming "Traitor!" Once finished with Bill-Y, they attack clones at random,

pulling out weapons from behind the desk. When the melee is over, Beta-6 will direct the Troubleshooters to their large, sealed, black equipment crate.

Beta 6: Annoying and stupid robot

Skills: Dodge: 6, Mechanics: 8
Armor: ALL4
Tactics: Run around changing personalities. Says "Ay-yi-yi."

NGR Clones

Mutant Power: Various
Secret Society: Various
Clearance: Yellow
Service Group: PLC
S8A7C2D7E4MA9M2P3
Macho: 2**Wounds:** 4**HTH:** 4
Skills: Brawling: 10, Dodge: 8, Laser Weapons: 5, Melee Weapons: 9, Energy Weapons 7, Pose Dramatically: 12
Equipment: 1 Laser Pistol (8L), 1 Red Reflec Armor (L4), 1 Melee Weapon (Choose 1) 2 Daggers (I4+4), Lance (B7+4), Axe (B6+4), Truncheon (B5+4), Force Sword (E12), Neurowhip (E10)
Armor: None
Tactics: Change Beta-6's mind. Receive promotion. Go Ballistic.
The crate's contents are entirely covered in white/Ultraviolet styrofoam peanuts, sticking to everything because of their static electric charge. Remember, touching the white peanuts is traitorous, so just getting the equipment out and cleaned off should be a challenge. An inventory list hangs on the outside.

The crate contains: 8 Red barrels, 2 Laser rifles, a Cone Rifle with 20 assorted shells, 6 Sonic Grenades, 2 Infrared Binoculars, 6 Backpacks, 50 Wakey-Wake pills, 1 Jackobot. The GM may add to the list.

Jack, the Jack-O-Bot

Description: A square box the size of a toaster, with treads and an extendible arm. Weight is 3 tons. He's made of a lead-like material.
Weapons: Hydraulic Drill: (8I)
Armor: Indestructible
Skills: All Mechanical: 10, Demolitions: 9, Survival: 12, Tie Boot Laces: 10, Sneak: 9, Hydraulic Drill: 6
Tactics: Personality module is based on 1990 cartoon shows: "Huh-uh, cool. You ee-diot! I'm, like, Jack, or something. Huh, I said Jack, cool. Yeah, Jack, Cool! Hellooooo, Nurse!" Jack enjoys tying boot laces together, too: "All of a sudden, Eld-R-SGN falls down!" Requesting a Med-Bot gets a referral to R&D.

4) GBI R&D: "Who You Gonna Call?"
GBI R&D is located so far from NGR that the Troubleshooters must find transportation. Hailing a transbot works; too bad Cult members sabotaged it. The transbot desires to commit suicide, *with* its passengers. It carries a bomb.

The transbot goes in circles around GBI R&D at high speed. It plays "Taps" with ever-increasing frequency. The door is locked from the outside. The transbot will explode just after the Troubleshooters find a way out. (Or, if you're a sadistic GM and everyone still has clones, just before.) The walls are ALL3.

GBI R&D is run by 3 of Pete-R-VKM's fellow INTSEC plants, "Busters." They are Spen-G-LER-4, Sta-Y-NTZ-4 and Zedm-O-RRR-2. Their goal is to "bust" Jan-Y-ENE for being a Computer Phreak. R&D is a large, open area. As you approach the front desk, you hear a gibbering sound. Make a gibbering sound. A small, transparent green mutant flies through the air, right at a randomly selected Troubleshooter. It's a force-hologram made of thickened jelly. If it hits, it explodes into green goo, sliming the clone. Keep it flying until it hits someone. A Red tech comes out,

apologizes, and then yells into the room he came from: "It works, Slime-R!" The yellow secretary doesn't pay any attention. She's wearing headphones and staring straight at the group through visors. This headgear is plugged into her desk terminal. There is a name-plate on the desk that says "Jan-Y-ENE-2." She's chewing something. (It's gum.)

This Computer Phreak is "Jacked In." If the PCs unplug her, they must wait for the convulsions to stop and the blood to quit fountaining from her mouth and nose. The only safe way to get her attention is to tap her on the shoulder. "I'm Jan-Y-ENE-2 (or 3 if she died), the secretary here at GBI R&D. May I help you?"

After any answer, she will say, "We've been waiting for you. Hold on." She presses a button on her intercom. "Paging Spen-G-LER-4, please report to the front desk, your baggage has arrived."

Soon, a Green R&D Tech approaches. He has dark, curly hair, and wears spectacles. He massages Jan's back while saying "I'm Spen-G-LER. Oh, hi, Pete-R, follow me." At this point, Jan-Y-ENE slumps to the desk, dead. Spen-g-ler-4 killed his traitor with a nice neck-grip. He leads you through a few corridors where clones are testing R&D devices that erase things. In fact, there's a clone without a face. Eww. The group arrives in a large room filled with all sorts of equipment. Spen-g-ler-4 yells to the Yellow and Orange workers in the room, "Hey Ray, Winston, help me out here." Sta-Y-NTZ-4 and Zedm-O-RRR-2 come to distribute equipment.

Experimental Equipment List

Six bottle case of Miska-Tonic: A.K.A. Bouncy Bubble Beverage Clear.

GM: Causes mutations to imbiber within 2 hours of consumption. The victim's eyes will bulge out and he will begin to look fishlike and desire to swim in water.

The Reanimatorbot: A highly experimental Medical bot in its final stages of Development. It has special medical procedures that can cure anything.

GM: The reanimatorbot works. It even revives dead clones . . . into *zombies*! Replacements arrive in time to see the old clone get up and attack, chat, fall apart, eat brains, etc. "Fixed" arms and legs tend to act on their own.

Reanimatorbot
Weapons: Surgical Chainsaws: (I12)
Armor: (I3L2)
Skills: Chainsaw: 7, All Moxie: 10, Reanimate: 10
Tactics: Reanimate/Heal to the best of his ability.
Three Proton Packs and a Trap: Highly classified ranged weapons powered by nuclear accelerators. They emit powerful beams of energy at whatever they are aimed at. They're large backpacks with a laser rifle attached. The trap is a spring loaded contraption to throw under an enemy once set.

GM: The trap is a typical bear trap. The Packs shoot out nifty light beams that have absolutely no effect. If crossed, the beams intensify to magnifying-glass-under-sun power. Crossing all three beams has the potential to do a lot of damage, but not before the packs melt down into the backs of the Troubleshooters wearing them.

Invulnerability Spray: This fantastic spray is a super armor which protects from all attacks. Just spray it over the entire body and the invulnerability will take effect.

GM: This is a time-delayed super shellac. For 10 minutes the user, who is now permanently coated in ALL20 armor, can move freely. After 10 minutes, the shellFac becomes harder than a concrete shell. Only constant Strength checks allow movement.

A bottle of 20 Stress-Area-Nullifier pills: These are a more advanced form of EZ-DUZ-IT. When your mental foundation is going to crumble, take one.

GM: These SAN pills will change a character's sanity condition to its exact opposite. Too bad everyone from Alpha

Complex is already insane. When a character takes a pill, he becomes sane. His mind clears and he has a moment of clarity, until it becomes too much for him and he goes insane again. This takes four seconds.

Danger Sensitive Glasses: These glasses give a feeling of comfort in times of danger. They cause a state of calmness and contentedness in the mind of the user when worn during battle.

GM: The glasses turn pitch black when the wearer is about to see something that could harm him.

Circle of Protection: A bright pink hoop that rattles. It operates by placing it around your hips and spinning it. It will protect from all attacks.

GM: This thing actually works, ALL20, but one must make an END check each turn to keep it working.

The Yellow Sign: A bright yellow sign with the word "Yield" printed on it. It is used to stop others from attacking so you can get in the first shot.

GM: It's yellow.

Transdimensional Rift Assessing Polarizer: It is used to determine the power of an energy rift in case you come across any.

GM: The T.R.A.P. works on the rift in RKM sector; unfortunately it channels the energy into its wielder.

Gum Explosive: This pack contains 12 foil-wrapped sticks of gum. The gum must be chewed exactly 10 times and then thrown at the target.

GM: Make that an *average* of 10 times. Roll 1d20. After that number of chews, it will explode in three more seconds. 8F damage.

Spen-G-LER secretly gives Pete-R-VKM a pair of X-Ray Glasses. When worn, everything is viewed inside out. Clones are seen with the inside of their skin on the outside.

5) The Mission
(A) Spen-g-ler-4 tells the Troubleshooters he has two surprises for them. First, he's going to give them the latest and most expensive items R&AMPD recently manufactured, the six parts of The Mark IX. "Mark IX has done well in field tests, and is ready to be tested with Troubleshooting teams. Mark IX is for *outdoors* sector use only. You will each be given a special Com E unit to call your assigned member of Mark IX. When you want to summon your robot, yell 'Mark IX [robot type] activate!' into your unit. There's a voice activated sequence used to form Mark IX. Once the robots have been summoned, each Troubleshooter must read aloud his part of the password passage." Spen-g-ler-4 hands each Troubleshooter a Com E unit.

Assign one of the following robots to each player: War-bot, Jack-O-Bot, Docbot, Flybot, Funbot, and Scrubot.

Hand each player one of the following passages:

Passage 1: Docbot/Torso/I'll Be/Let's
Passage 2: And Warbot/Flybot And/The Traitor/Go
Passage 3: Form The/Funbot/Scrubot/Mark
Passage 4: Legs/Form The/Form/Nine
Passage 5: Jackobot/Arms/The/Force,
Passage 6: Make The/And/Head/Kill!

The person with Passage 1 reads the first word(s), then the person with Passage 2, and so on. After the first word(s) of Passage 6, start over with the second word(s) and continue until the whole thing has been read. (So it starts: "Docbot and Warbot form the legs . . .") If any mistakes are made, the whole password must be started over.

The second surprise is, "To facilitate rapid clone replacement in the field, R&AMPD invented the BI-winged, Aerial, Clone, Insertion System, the BIACIS." These machines are six Ornithopter-like contraptions that hunker down and have four large wings sprouting from their backs. He says "They're perfectly harmless, and their razor-sharp talons, used to carry clone replacements to destinations, are extremely precise and never cut through flesh. These will carry you to RKM sector and bring any replacements you may require throughout the rest of the mission."

Objectors can walk. To those who will fly, Spen-g-ler-4 says "Stand where you are, the BIACIS will get you." The BIACIS rise up using VeRTOL technology. Each flaps its four wings over to a clone and grabs him in its talons. The clones will be transported at supersonic speed to RKM, landing next to Orange Dorm, #346. A tough END check must be made to see if anyone faints. After dropping off their cargo, the BIACIS fly away.

(B) The Communications and Recording officer should contact Shub Nigg-U-RTH at this time. Nyarloth-O-TEP will answer. "This is Nyarloth-O-TEP-3. You're to enter Orange Dorm #346 and enter the sewers via the secret passage in Room 4. When you arrive at the cult, pretend to be cult members. Your mission is to kill Kath-U-LHU-6 and destroy the Cult."

Orange Dorm #346 is an Orange citizen dorm. Inside, both citizens and Troubleshooters on duty are shooting screamers. Room 4 is in the back; there is an air duct in the ceiling that is open, leading to the sewers. The sewers have running lights. The troubleshooters are on one of two ledges on either side of a flowing stream of sewage.

Fun things to do in the sewers include:

Make them walk around aimlessly for hours, thanks to bad directions from Nyarloth-O-TEP.
Encounter rats or mutant monstrosities.
Enter a nuclear reactor core.
Cross the sewage stream.
Let the lights go out and re-choose.
Remind Gibb-R-ING he has *never* seen the HQ, and so doesn't know how to get there.

Sooner or later, the clones discover a large airlock. There are piles of discarded clothes outside of the airlock. The airlock is locked, and requires a Tough Mechanics roll to open, one attempt per turn. The airlock is ALL2 and takes 10 Wounds before opening up. Taking the rough approach will alert the inhabitants, who'll be ready for the Troubleshooters.

While this is going on, up to 20 tentacles will swing out of the water, grabbing Troubleshooters who don't make a Normal dodge roll. The tentacles are long, green, and slimy. It's unsure what they're attached to because it's hidden by the murky water. Each tentacle's slime is L2 armor, and can take 3 wounds. The tentacles can be distracted by large chunks of meat which they will gladly take instead of Troubleshooters, provided of course that the Troubleshooters have any such tasty items on them . . .

(C) The HQ has 4 rooms:

1) Main Hall

This is where the Airlock leads. The area is furnished with all sorts of torture devices, a nice rug, and two doors, one on either side wall. Each door bears the same symbol, a five-pointed star with The Computer's ever-watching eye in the center. Piping sounds can be heard from the door on the left. Left goes to 2) Summoning Room, right to 4) Bathroom.

2) The Summoning Room

There are five citizens here, dancing around a large, five-pointed star drawn on the ground. At each point of the star is a flare. Each clone wears a green mask, just like Shub Nigg-U-RTH's white mask. The red and orange clones are making piping sounds through a tube they hold to their mouths. The green and indigo clones are tossing red liquid (blood), chanting something ("Cthulhu"), and spitting (ftagn!). The fifth is Kath-U-LHU-6, an Ultraviolet, who dances

around the center, chanting. There is a door in the far wall, leading to 3) Library. It smells odd in here from the incense. Any clones failing a Simple Endurance test will faint.

The cultists notice as the troubleshooters enter. The cult is opening a rift to Massachusetts. The glowing, white rift will appear during combat in the middle of the star. Kath-U-LHU-6 *always* makes it through; others don't have to. Once everyone's been dealt with and at least Kath-U-LHU-6 has gone, all that will be left is a strange, undulating color hanging out in space. If contacted, Nyarloth-O will order them *through* the rift to follow Kath-U-LHU-6. Once they go, the rift closes.

Cultists:
Weapons: Laser Gun (8I)
Mutant Powers: Kath-U-LHU: Charm, Az-O-TTH-4: Levitation, Az-R-ADD: Energy Field, Shog-G-OTH-2: Polymorphism, Dunw-I-TCH-5: Regeneration
S5 A8 C8 D5 E3 MA3 M8 P6
Armor: Divine Intervention & Reflec (L4)
Skills: Summon Rift: 10, Oratory: 9, Dodge: 10
Tactics: Finish Ceremony. Run from Troubleshooters into rift. Defend Kath-U-LHU.
3) The Library

This room is a Romantic's dream. Here there are manuscripts crumbling with age, books lining the shelves, and sheaves of yellowed computer paper. It's extremely flammable in here. Sample books include *How to program in C++; Learn to Read Ancient Latin in 6 Weeks; The History of Liechtenstein; Ernie and Bert Can, Can You?,* and *De Vermis Mysteris.* A wide selection.

4) Bathroom

There should be one in *every* adventure.

(D) Once everyone's entered the rift: *Floating through a shapeless void, you see Colors of which the like you've never witnessed before. You smell ozone and feel aglow with energy. All of a sudden, you arrive. The first thing you notice, before the scenery, is that you are all now totally white, even your skin and weaponry.* They encountered a Color out of Space that bleached them.

The group is now in Outdoors Sector, Massachusetts. Around them are many buildings made out of red bricks, and 50 green mutants hopping around. Each has odd, sunken eyes, and tremendous mouths, from which issue croaking sounds. In the distance, they see Kath-U-LHU-6 (and any lackeys) run into a large building. All clone replacements are delivered via BIACIS.

Deep Ones
Weapons: Teeth and Claws (8I)
S8 A4 C1 D8 E7 MA1 M1 P1
Macho: 3**Wounds:** 5**HTH:** 4
Skills: Brawling: 5, Dodge: 4
Armor: I3
Tactics: Kill Troubleshooters, and die trying.
The clones *cannot* summon Mark IX yet. If they try and fail, Spen-g-ler-4 will explain (if contacted and asked) that the Troubleshooters are out of range. Apparently, dealing with dimensional rifts was not part of his design goals. Spen-g-ler-4 assures the Troubleshooters that when they get back in range, Mark IX will work fine.

A sign on the building Kath-U-LHU-6 went into reads: Misk****** Library. The sign is really worn.

Upon entering: The variation in colors that line the walls are as bad as when you went through that rift. The walls are lined with a variety of colored blocks that look like expanded pamphlets. Some of you have heard of these. They're called books and you've seen higher clearances reading them. You hear a noise toward the back of the building upstairs, kind of an odd, crying sound.

Kath-U opened another rift, this time to R'lyeh. He used the Necronomicon to do this. He's travelling via a picture in the book. The Troubleshooters arrive just in time to see a large book close, with the High-Programmer's feet sticking out of it. The feet enter the book before the Troubleshooters can do anything. The book has the title "Necronomicon." It's bound in a meatylike substance known as human skin.

Opening the Necronomicon will have one of the following effects:

The book will eat the offending Troubleshooter. "It flaps into the air and slams down on you. You're not there anymore." He went to R'lyeh.

Reading the book will cause a clone to run around the room screaming for 10 minutes and then desire to read more.

The reader, unless in a magic circle, will float into the air and suddenly his spine will snap.

The reader will see a picture come alive and then get sucked into the book.

The book grows teeth and chomps the hand of its reader.

Eventually, everyone gets to R'lyeh.

(E) Once everyone arrives, describe the surroundings (the others were getting acquainted with the view). The characters are still in Outdoors Sector, but this time it's different. A large expanse of water can be seen on all sides. They're on an island made of white, stone-like structures. To their left are a bunch of pillars and a few columns. To their right is a building. When re-describing, change stuff around to simulate the ever-changing aspect of the island and its indescribable non-Euclidian geometry.

Eventually they run across everyone in the adventure the GM sent to R'lyeh because they were "Disintegrated" by the Teleport Ray, *especially* Pow-R-NGR-2, who now has a beard, a burning desire for vengeance against Eld-R-SGN, and Pow-R-NGR-1's stats.

When appropriate, the group will see Kath-U-LHU-6 laughing at them in front of two giant double doors. He screams, "You cannot defeat Great Kath-U-LHU-6!" At that moment, the doors behind him swing open and a giant green foot steps on him. Large tentacles whip out attacking everyone as a giant, green beast, bigger than Mark IV, steps out of its shadowy crypt. The players will probably summon the Mark IX robots for the titanic final battle. It's all right if there are fewer than six clones left to summon the robots. They'll still arrive.

You hear a rumble, and electricity fills the air. The light overhead dims and the rumble becomes louder. Even the great tentacled beast seems distracted. Odd muzak can be heard. All of a sudden, you can see it. Six shapes fly to the island. They land and you see the familiar outlines of Alpha Complex robots. The great, green beast steps towards the cluster of bots. One of them, probably the Warbot, opens up his weaponry and blasts at the tentacles reaching towards it. You see a cream pie fly from the Funbot. They aren't forming Mark IX. I wonder why not?

The Troubleshooters have to recite the 24-part invocation they were given - without error - to form Mark IX. Otherwise, the bots get stomped, and Cthulhu comes over to eat the Troubleshooters. If the Troubleshooters read the script correctly, Mark IX is formed, just as described, the All-Mighty Scrubot forming the head.

Have the players elect someone to portray Mark IX. The GM (or another player) will be Cthulhu. Two other players (or 1 & GM) will roll dice. Now play a "Live-Action" Street Fighter/Mortal Kombat style fight. Mark IX must "summon" a weapon before he can use it. In the ensuing battle, pillars will topple, buildings will crumble and clones just might get squashed.

Mark IX
Description: Magnificent Clone-like Robot. Over 200 ft. Tall.
Weapons: Fists (10B), Missiles (20E), Fiery Lance (15B or P if thrown), Gatling Gun (12P), Soap Spray (Projectile,

roll Dex or slip), Mega-Cream Pie (Obscurement), Blazing Sword (30B)
Skills: Brawling: 14, Projectile Weapons: 9, Generate Fiery Lance: 13, Thrown Weapons: 11, Field Weapons: 12, Make Cream Pie: 16, Missile Weapons: 10, Form Blazing Sword: 6, Pose Dramatically: 10, Dodge: 12
Macho: 10**Wounds:** 60
Armor: ALL 10
Tactics: Defend Alpha Complex from giant monsters.
Cthulhu
Description: Giant, green humanoid with a squid-like head, tentacled beard, two arms and vestigial bat-like wings.
Weapons: Tentacles (Like a Tangler, but brings Mark IX closer for melee combat. Mark IX can break out in 1 round), Fists (12B), Fireball (20E), Energy Blast (15E)
Skills: Tangle with Tentacles: 12, Brawling: 13, Cast Fireball: 10, Cast Energy Blast: 13
Macho: 12**Wounds:** 80
Armor: ALL8
Tactics: Kill
If Mark IX wins, make a "Pose Dramatically" roll. No matter what the results, Mark IX will pose dramatically, placing his left foot on the Troubleshooter team. Oops. He then flies off; Cthulhu will be back one day. If Cthulhu wins, he will hunt down the rest of the clones and eat them, one by one. Then he'll be too tired to take over the world and will go back into the island to sleep for another millennia. The island will sink beneath the waves.

6) Debriefing
Everyone's next clone is brought in front of a group of officers. The Troubleshooters are lined up in front of a large desk and an Ultraviolet is there to speak to them. "I am High Programmer Hast-U-RRR-4," he says angrily. "I want to see the reports you were supposed to make on the efficiency of our new housing Dorm experiment and 48-hour alarm wakening!" The clones will realize that they had gone to the wrong briefing.

If the Troubleshooters admit they don't have the reports (or if they try to get out of it with something like a Tough Con roll but fail), Hast bellows, "What? You don't have the Reports? What sort of Trouble-shooters are you? I am going to declare you all traitors to the complex, for I am Hast-U-RRR! Do you hear me? Hast-U-RRR! I am Hast-U-RRR!" By saying 'Hastur' 3 times, the elder god, Hastur, is summoned. Everyone gets eaten, except for smart Troubleshooters who run. Hastur is asked to become a citizen of Alpha Complex, end of game.

If the Troubleshooters find a way out, Hast says, "What? I'm really grateful that you've gotten the documents. You're all breveted to Orange Clearance. Have a nice Daycycle. Oh, by the way, do you guys know what my name is?" (See above ending.)

Optional Ending: Have Mark IX come back and

fight Hastur.

Player Characters

Pete-R-VKM-1

Service Group: Production Logistics and Commissary (PLC)
(Actually Undercover Internal Security (INTSEC))
Attributes and Known Skills
Strength: 5**Hand To Hand:** 2**Carrying Capacity:** 30
Endurance: 6**Macho:** 3**Wounds**: 5
Agility: 7 (4)

Brawling: 5, Melee Weapons: 5
Chutzpah: 10 (5)
Persuasion: 7, Interrogation: 6, Fast Talk: 8
Dexterity: 8 (4)
Laser Weapons: 6, Energy Weapons: 7
Mechanical Aptitude: 1 (1)
Moxie: 5 (3)
Habitat Engineering: 2
Power: 3
Skills: Dodge: 6,
Personal Equipment (*Treasonous): Truncheon, Stylus and Pencil, 3 Yellow Barrels*, 6-Pack of Bouncy Bubble Beverage, 2 Mini-Parachutes, 50 Doze-NOW! Pills
Plasticredits: 15
Secret Society: Free Enterprise
Mutant Power: Charm
Background: During INTSEC training, you were a "Buster," a team who'd go around and "bust" traitors. One Buster, Sta-Y-NTZ-2, got you to join Free Enterprise. You're a natural in sales and scavenging. Being extremely low on cash, it might be wise to sell some merchandise that you carry. Merchandise is merchandise, but plasticreds are everything. Now, as a PLC plant, you get more access to merchandise.

Service Group Assignment: INTSEC has set you up as a PLC plant because they want you to get more information on a new secret society. INTSEC believes Henry-R-MTG, a PLC worker in your Troubleshooter team, is part of this society. Keep an eye on him and make constant reports to the other INTSEC Busters, disguised at R&AMPD. Ask Spen-G-LER for your special R&AMPD item.

Personal Feelings: Herb-R-WST turned in some INTSEC plants last weekcycle. He must have mutant mind-reading powers. Discover his secret and eliminate him.

Secret Society Mission: For sale: No-Doze pills, B.B.B., and Red laser barrels painted yellow. Gibb-R-ING welshed a Free Enterpriser. Make him pay his debts.

Mandatory Bonus Duty: Loyalty Officer

Eld-R-SGN-1

Service Group: Central Processing Unit (CPU)
Attributes and Known Skills
Strength: 4Hand To Hand: 2Carrying Capacity: 30
Endurance: 7Macho: 3Wounds: 5
Agility: 7 (4)
Chutzpah: 8 (4)
Con: 6, Spurious Logic: 6, Perception: 5
Dexterity: 2 (1)
Laser Weapons: 5
Mechanical Aptitude: 8 (4)
Juryrigging: 7
Moxie: 7 (4)
Computer Programming (Treasonous): 6
Power: 6 for Matter Eater, 2 for Energy Field
Personal Equipment: 1 Teela-O-Mally Lucky Mirror with Blush, 1 Happiness Energy Bar, 2 Bouncy Bubble Beverages, 1 Teleport Ray, 2 Happy-Tyme Pills
Plasticredits: 80
Secret Society: Mystic
Mutant Power(s): Matter Eater (Registered), Energy Field

Background: You *love* being a registered Matter Eater. It lets you digest anything that others can't, especially pills. All those neat sensations, it's like being in a food vat with the mixer running. You've got to find more pills. Maybe someone in the Troubleshooting group has some. The "Teleport Ray" is actually an R&AMPD "Disintegration Ray" you stole. You forged some papers, disguising it as a harmless R&AMPD "Teleport Ray." It disintegrates anything. You disintegrated Pow-R-NGR-1 because he found out about you.

Personal Feelings: Pow-R-NGR-2 might want to get back at you for disintegrating his clone brother. You're unsure if he knows you killed him. Gibb-R-ING is actually an Internal Security plant. Watch him.

Service Group Assignment: CPU is having some odd malfunctions because a new secret society is searching classified computer files. CPU wants its members to report any information they discover on this new society, ASAP.

Secret Society Mission: The Mystics told you some experimental pills will be assigned to your group in R&AMPD. Do your best to get them, test them, and then deliver them to a Mystic drop-off site. Also, there's a new cult somewhere practicing some really trippy stuff. Chill out with them and tell us anything you find out.

Mandatory Bonus Duty: Team Leader.

Gibb-R-ING-2

Service Group: Technical Services
Attributes and Known Skills
Strength:7Hand To Hand: 3Carrying Capacity: 50
Endurance: 9Macho: 4Wounds: 6
Agility: 6 (3)
Sneak: 6
Chutzpah: 1 (1)
Con: 4
Dexterity: 7 (4)
Laser Weapons: 6
Mechanical Aptitude: 10 (5)
Autocar Maintenance & Repair: 6, Docbot Maint & Repair: 6, Scrubot Maint & Repair: 6, Jackobot Maint & Repair: 8
Moxie: 5 (3)
Electronics: 4, Chemistry: 4
Power: 7 (4)
Personal Equipment: 1 Drug Therapy Kit with 25 EZ-DUZ-IT & 25 Wider Awake Pills, 2 D Batteries.
Plasticredits: 57
Secret Society: Cult of Kath-U-LHU (Formerly Illuminati)
Mutant Power(s): Levitation
Background: You've had weird dreams lately, and so have other clones. Friend Computer has it out for clones who wake up screaming with dreams of tentacled giants and places with weird angles, ordering Troubleshooters to kill anyone who wakes up screaming. You were contacted by a higher-up (you think) in the Illuminati, who's part of a new secret society made of only clones who've been having these dreams, The Cult of Citizen Kath-U-LHU-6. You're a new member, and if anyone found out, you'd be dead meat. The goal of the Cult is to take over Alpha Complex by summoning "The Dead Dreamer" who will take over for Friend Computer. Your mission is to try to recruit new members.

Personal Feelings: Pow-R-NGR got passed up for a promotion you received in TECH. He's obviously jealous. Free Enterprise secret society is after you for welshing on paying for those batteries; they might make you pay.

Secret Society Mission: There's another Illuminati in the team. It's either Eld-R-SGN or Pow-R-NGR. Ask if they have "dreams," then recruit them. Foul up the actions of enemy Illuminati leader Hast-U-RRR-4.

Mandatory Bonus Duty: Happiness Officer

Henry-R-MTG-2

Service Group: Production, Logistics and Commissary (PLC)
Attributes and Known Skills
Strength: 2Hand To Hand: 1Carrying Capacity: 30
Endurance: 9Macho: 1Wounds: 3
Agility: 6 (3)
Sneak: 5
Chutzpah: 5 (3)
Bribe: 6
Dexterity: 7 (4)
Laser Weapons: 8
Mechanical Aptitude: 7 (4)
Jackobot Operation and Maintenance: 6
Moxie: 10 (5)
Habitat Engineering: 6, Electronics: 8
Power: 6 for Precognition, 6 for Telepathy
Personal Equipment: 1 Wristcom Unit I, 1 Multicorder I, 12 R&AMPD Grenades
Plasticredits: 92
Secret Society: PSION
Mutant Power(s): Precognition (REGISTERED), Telepathy
Background: You're the mentalist, code-named Professor A, of a special branch of PSION known as A-Men. They're a crack PSION team who deal with "traitorous" mutants. You recently lost all your hair in a battle against Citizen Apok-O-LIP-5. On a visit to R&AMPD, you "accidentally" picked up a box of unlabeled grenades.

Personal Feelings: Pete-R-VKM and Herb-R-WST are minions of Apok-O. Eliminate them.

Secret Society Mission: PSION wants you to look out for a new secret society starting up. It's run by minions of Apok-O-LIP-5 and another, darker force. Keep PSION updated constantly.

Mandatory Bonus Duty: Communications and Recording Officer.

Herb-R-WST-1

Service Group: Housing, Preservation & Mind Control (HPD&AMPMC)
Attributes and Known Skills
Strength: 7Hand To Hand: 3Carrying Capacity: 50
Endurance: 2Macho: 1Wounds: 3
Agility: 1 (2)
Dodge: 3
Chutzpah: 8 (4)
Oratory: 7
Dexterity: 9 (5)
Laser Weapons: 6
Mechanical Aptitude: 6 (3)
Docbot Operation and Maintenance: 4
Moxie: 10 (5)
Electronics: 6, First Aid: 8, Nuclear Engineering: 6, Demolitions: 8
Power: 5
Personal Equipment: 6 HPD&AMPMC Pamphlets, 1 Napalm Cone Rifle Shell
Plasticredits: 60
Secret Society: Illuminati
Mutant Power: Machine Empathy

Background: AAAAAAAH, the dreams again! For the past few weekcycles, you've been having nightcyclemares. They're strange dreams with breathing sounds and green beasts with tentacles for beards, and white places with undefinable angles. Every time you wake, you feel the urge to scream, but Troubleshooters have been ordered to shoot screaming clones, so you've kept your mouth shut. Some clones who don't get shot just disappear. You're too afraid of death to tell Friend Computer of the dreams, no matter how nice It was to you in the past. Find out what's going on.

Service Group Assignment: HPD&AMPMC wants you to distribute your 6 "How to Sleep Right" pamphlets to all clonekind.

Personal Feelings: Internal Security (INTSEC) is on to you. They found out about your dreams with their Mutant Mind-Readers. You turned some INTSEC in as traitors last weekcycle. INTSEC disguises its agents as members from different service groups. They usually duplicate a group already in a Troubleshooter team. There are 2 clones here from PLC and 2 from Tech, so there might even be 2 INTSEC plants after you. Get them first.

Secret Society Mission: Illuminati last left you this message: "Bah-weep-grahna-weep-nini-bong. Shub knows all. Ask him much. Kill Henry-R-MTG. Pow-R-NGR will kill you. Fnord."

Mandatory Bonus Duty: Equipment Guy

Pow-R-NGR-2

Service Group: Technical Services (TECH)
Attributes and Known Skills
Strength: 6Hand To Hand: 3Carrying Capacity: 40
Endurance: 9Macho: 4Wounds: 6
Agility: 10 (5)
Force Weapons: 9, Sneak, 7
Chutzpah: 6 (3)
Fast Talk: 5
Dexterity: 5 (3)
Laser Pistol: 5
Mechanical Aptitude: 1 (1)
Autocar Operation and Maintenance: 2, Scrubot Operation and Maintenance: 3, Docbot Operation and Maintenance: 2
Moxie: 4 (2)
Biosciences: 3, Spurious Logic: 3
Power: 5
Personal Equipment: 1 Skin Core Sampler, toothbrush, flashlight.
Plasticredits: 45
Secret Society: Corpore Metallica
Mutant Power(s): Polymorphism
Background: Corpore Metallica is *great* when you can change into a robot using polymorphism! You turn into other things too, but robots are the best! The form you like to parade around in is as an android warbot with a stationary mouth. It makes people think you're a guy in full armor, especially when you shake your head when speaking.

Personal Feelings: Gibb-R-ING is a fellow Tech services representative. He got a job you were up for, and you really hate him for that. If he were to die, you would get his cushier job. Your previous clone, Pow-R-NGR-1, died under mysterious circumstances; no body was found. An informant told you that Eld-R-SGN-1 was at the scene.

Secret Society Mission: Corpore twisted arms and got your Troubleshooter group assigned some very special robotic R&AMPD equipment. Get your grapplers on it and transport it to Corpore HQ along with any other robots you're assigned.

Mandatory Bonus Duty: Hygiene Officer.

Online Support available for this Adventure at http://w3.one.net/~joshdm/paracoc.html.

A New Character Type for Feng Shui by James Lowder

"I'm sorry I don't have my history essay done, ma'am, but I spent the whole weekend foiling a plot to turn all us kids into zombies . . ."

Not too long ago, your picture might have appeared as an illustration of the phrase, "bad girl." You got into trouble early in life, spending time in Japanese reform schools and maybe even prison. Your crimes - a long string of minor delinquencies or a single, big-time heist - brought you to the attention of Tokyo law enforcement in a major way. Even locked away you proved unmanageable. You turned your wits and your considerable fighting skills to destructive ends whenever the chance arose. The local authorities pretty much had written you off as a career jailbird.

And then it happened ...

The "it" we're talking about is different for many Schoolgirl Cops, but there are some common scenarios (all of which can help you design a melodramatic hook). Most often, talented troublemakers like you were whisked from the reform school or prison to a shadowy government office. There, you were offered a pardon for any past crimes - on one condition. You had to join a special undercover unit for a number of years equal to your original sentence. If you were the stubborn sort, the government encouraged you in creative ways - offering to place sick friends higher up on organ-donation lists or grant a stay of execution to a relative slated for the gas chamber. It's clear, though, that the gift will be revoked the moment you step out of line.

Or perhaps you sought out the opportunity to join the force. Something or someone made you aware of the suffering your actions had inflicted upon innocents. One particularly heartbreaking example inspired you to repent your delinquent ways and atone for your crimes. The government somehow learned of your change of heart. They were more than happy to provide you with a government-sanctioned way to pay back your debt to society.

Now, as part of a semi-secret unit, you investigate corruption and crime as it relates to teenagers. You frequently go undercover in schools both in Japan and Hong Kong. More often than you might think, such work puts you in conflict with crime bosses, mad scientists and fanatics trying to conquer the world. You may or may not be interested in the greater war, but you refuse to see kids manipulated or put in danger by these evil forces. If that drags you into a larger conflict, so be it. Since the government will not publicly acknowledge your unit's existence, you're used to coping with the evil-doers - whether they be drug pushers or weird cyber-demons from the future - on your own.

Juncture: Contemporary
Attributes: Bod 5, Chi 0 (Fu=4), Mnd 5 (Will=6), Ref 5
Add 2 points to one primary attribute, 1 point to a different primary attribute and 2 points to a secondary attribute.
Skills: Detective +2 (=11)
Info/Teenage Psychology +2 (7)
Info/Pop Culture +2 (8)
Martial Arts +8 (=13)
Police +2 (6)
Sabotage +4 (9) [Max 12]
Add 4 skill bonuses.
Schticks: 2 gun schticks, 1 fu schtick

Weapons: 1 gun (special)

Some Special Weapon Choices:

Battle Yo-Yo 8/1/1

This is a specially built metal and ceramic yo-yo on a bulletproof ceramic string. There is a hidden panel on one side that pops opens to reveal your unit's government ID badge. No reload cost.

Super Battle Yo-Yo 10/2/1

A prototype advancement on the standard battle yo-yo. Each side of the yo-yo bears three lead weights, which add to the damage it inflicts. Yo-yo will strike up to three targets per throw if targets are grouped together. Special shoulder and wrist braces must be worn during use. Extended or unprotected use will result in damage to the user's arm (+1 difficulty increase per 10 uses, cumulative; penalties are doubled without braces). No reload cost.

Marbles 7/1/3

Standard schoolyard marbles, thrown from between the fingers on one hand (up to 3 at a time). Can inflict automatic burst bonus. Marbles are drawn from hip pouch. To reload pouch costs 6 shots.

Razor Origami 8/1/1

Little origami animals, most often birds, folded from thin metal. They rest flat in your pocket until you snap them open for throwing. Origami are drawn from small hip pouch. To reload pouch costs 6 shots.

Unique Schtick: By spending a Fortune die in conjunction with any especially heroic action - facing down a helicopter gunship with a battle yo-yo, for example, you can motivate any teenagers watching you to join the fight. The teens will endanger themselves for you, but you will suffer distracting guilt should they be harmed. If any or all of the teens are seriously injured, difficulties of all actions will increase by one until you avenge them. Deaths result in a difficulty increase of +3. Actions directly related to your pursuit of revenge for the teens are unaffected.

Quick Schtick Pick:
weapons: Battle yo-yo
gun schticks: Signature Weapon
Eagle Eye
fu schtick:
Gathering of the Clouds
Wealth Level: Working Stiff

GURPS Discworld Designer's Notes:
by Phil Masters, with assistance, illustrations by Paul Kidby

Watch closely, the special effects are quite expensive.

- Terry Pratchett, in ***Equal Rites***

GURPS Discworld is the first licensed-adaptation RPG supplement that I've worked on, and it turned out that the task, rather predictably, is easier in some places and harder in others than other supplement writing. It's made quite a bit easier by the fact that certain crucial work has already been done; the setting not only exists (like that of a historical sourcebook), but it's specifically built to take stories. But there's also a catch; the supplement has to respect the style and nature of its sources.

When those sources consist of no less than 20 novels, which are well known and deservedly loved by a lot of dedicated fans, and when the setting has evolved in subtle and substantial ways over the series - there's only one thing for it. A writer has to turn to his playtesters.

What Are Friends For?

"You ever done this sort of thing before?"
"What sort of thing?"
"Rushed into a temple, killed the prieshts, shtolen the gold and reshcued the girl."
"No, not in so many words."
"You do it like thish."
- Terry Pratchett, in ***The Light Fantastic***

This project inevitably attracted some very enthusiastic volunteer playtesters, all of whom richly deserve thanks. I was especially lucky in that John Dallman, a fellow gamer, friend, and hard-working GM, was looking for a new campaign idea to use on his regular group. As a ***GURPS*** and *Discworld* fan, he asked very nicely, and I lent him a copy of the first draft.

He not only tested the thing - he came back with a campaign description that could serve as a useful model for GMs who've just picked up this supplement. I think it deserves to be quoted intact.

John's Report

"How about playtesting ***GURPS Discworld***?" I said to my Tuesday evening group, as the ***Feng Shui*** campaign spin-kicked its way to a confusing end.

"Err . . . maybe . . ." they said. "Only one of us has played ***GURPS*** before."

"That's OK; if you can cope with ***Shadowrun***, you can handle ***GURPS*** And I don't expect that the *rules* will be hugely important."

"All right," they said, "but we need a vague plot outline. Pratchett characters are fairly well fitted to their stories; the Discworld doesn't have parties of generic adventurers, and it wouldn't feel right if we added some. We need some starting ideas."

They were right, of course. I thought about this for a few days, and stared at the maps, and found one solution to this problem.

The Discworld holds a distorting mirror up to the here-and-now, in terms of its societies and its characters. Let's try doing that, on a smaller scale, to my players. What characteristics do they have that I can exploit?

Well, I have two Welsh computer programmers. They'd be Llamedosian druids; how can we take them out of their normal context? I fancy running the campaign in Ankh-Morpork, so . . . ah, obvious, really. The senior druids of Llamedos, remembering that Ankh-Morpork grew up around the university, and knowing, of course, that any serious concentration of magical power must have some stone circles nearby, will send a couple of expert stone-circle programmers to the city to get the ancient stone circles operating again. Druids don't question their superiors if they have any idea what's good for them, so that's got things started.

So I told the players, and Daffyd and Rhodri decided that they'd play the druids without any real prompting from me. I needed a wizard and a watchman, so that they could have proper contact with the city institutions; an expert city guide/pickpocket came floating out of the crowd, and a witch and her cat wanted to be around. So far, so good. Then the players started fleshing out their characters . . .

You don't expect computer-nerd druids to be very much in touch with the world. However, when one is Overconfident and Impulsive, and the other Indecisive and Gullible, you can tell whose purses are going to get lighter fast. They didn't reckon they needed money, since "druids are entitled to take whatever they want," but the city soon put them right on that front. They were unfailingly confused, leading to heart-stopping moments like the AM$400 restaurant bill in a clip-joint deep in the Shades, taking flowers when they went to see the Patrician ("Patrician? I thought you said 'Patricia.' ") and the introduction of the Llamedos Tea Ceremony ("One lump or two?") to the porters of Unseen University.

*(Phil comments: That's a consequence of letting the players see the **GURPS Compendia**, of course. There's a Tea Ceremony skill on the list, so of course they take it.)*

The normal mores of a party of adventurers did not really apply. Their guardsman, a dwarven werebadger (don't ask . . .) did the job he'd been assigned by the commander of the guard, by keeping them out of the graveyards. The wizard and the guide were just in it for all the money they could con out of the druids and the witch . . . Well, it happened like this.

There were indeed stone circles around Ankh-Morpork, as the Law of Narrative Causality implied. The first one they found was on the Tump, the hill with an old ruined castle on top, on the edge of the city proper. They excavated it, after paying their wizard a lot more for castings of Shape Earth, and managed to get it running. Making bad computer jokes (e.g., The Tump and /tmp) until the GM gives in works well, even on a system so old that "Syntax Error" is a thunderstorm.

Then the witch decided that they were a Bad Thing, and began telling people so. The protest movement developed quite fast, but not fast enough. "Is this circle networked to the next?" asked the druids. Meanwhile, the wizard had chipped a bit off one of their stones, and was trying Seek Earth. They found more stone circles, of increasing complexity, in a variety of awkward places: underneath a lake, holding up the clip-joint they'd run away from, built into the Fools Guild and . . . in the Unreal Estate.

Fools rush in where wizards fear to tread, and in they went. Running a stone circle with that much magical distortion in reality is . . . unwise. There was only a minor incursion from the Dungeon Dimensions, and they only got lightly shouted at by the Archchancellor. They left. They'd been told that if they came back, they'd leave by at least four gates simultaneously. But there are plenty more druids where they came from . . .

There was no combat, but a lot of running away from trolls. There were no tragic moments of kitsch, but there were a lot of players laughing themselves off their chairs. Discworld seems to work for gaming. I'll run some more soon.

Making an Entry

"Anywhere" represented a very restricted range of choices compared to the kind of places magic could transport you to.
- Terry Pratchett, in ***Eric***

One last thought. The Discworld works as a (fairly) straightforward fantasy game-world as well as a comedy setting; indeed, Discworld comedy is subtle stuff, and as John showed, it's actually better to treat the setting *fairly* straight, and let humor arise from character and events, rather than playing flat-out for laughs from the first.

Given this, some players might wish to have existing PCs transported to the Disc from previous game-worlds. However, GMs should think twice before permitting this. The Discworld is not a place that sees much traffic with other realities; it has quite enough weirdness of its own. However, there is always a chance that players will really, seriously want the security blanket of a preexisting PC, or that GMs are running "multiversal" campaigns that see PCs crashing from world to world like drunks looking for a bar that will serve them.

Given this, there may be a number of ways of arriving. The following possibilities were suggested by John M. Ford, who did a considerable amount of early work on the book.

Intentional Arrivals

Even if one deliberately "transports" in, the nature of the Disc is such that something unexpected is certain to happen on arrival:

- The PCs arrive in a dungeon; not a maze of 10-foot corridors full of monsters and loot, but a jail cell. The fact that they are in a cell doubtless proves to the guards that they belong there, despite the lack of paperwork.
- They land in the middle of a conflict: a tavern brawl, a disagreement between two merchants, any meeting between trolls and dwarfs, an actual war.
- Something odd happens to the travelers themselves: someone is transformed into a troll, they find that their equipment has been altered, or one or two people are missing and must be located.

Summoned Arrivals

Adventurers may be Summoned by a Discworld magic-user in (very) desperate need of assistance. They are likely plucked without warning from whatever world they are currently in. (Or worlds: the "team" might be from across the multiverse, and meet for the first time on arrival.)

Alternatively, the transit spell may be preset, waiting to be activated by the right circumstances. There is usually a Prophecy: "Should the Duchy of Wigginberg ever be threatened by Darkness, a party of Heroes from beyond the sky will come stumbling out of the garden maze, speaking of Critical Failures and Guisarme-Voulges." This is hardcore traditional fantasy. You can bet that the Disc will warp it.

Or the spell-caster visits the PCs, recruits them (promising fame, honor, and large sums of money), then leads them back through a portal. If he's smart enough to cast such a spell, he probably won't tell them in advance where the mission is to take place.

Unguided Arrivals

"Wizard! Get us out of here! NOW!!"
"Don't be silly. This isn't a magic portal."
"It appears to be a model of a flat planet."

"Don't touch -"

People exploring occult libraries may accidentally enter L-space and emerge on the Disc. Unseen University is the obvious point of arrival, but they could come out at any library. They might only be able to return home through the University Library, and then the assistance of the Librarian would be necessary.

And last of all, there are a number of *Wandering Shops* in the multiverse. These should be familiar to anyone who knows their fantasy; they appear unpredictably, and not only shut down before customers can take their purchases back for a refund (preferably of their sanity), but actually disappear, leaving a blank wall. They do not usually carry people (they are in retail, not public transport) but anything is possible.

I just hope that some of them are selling ***GURPS Discworld*** . . .

Feudal Lords in a *GURPS Fantasy* or *Middle Ages* Campaign

by S.A. Fisher

The real nobility of the Middle Ages lived a life of political intrigue and bloody battles. Leading their forces to war, putting enemy villages to the torch, and defending their lands from rival lords was a nobleman's way of life. They were a rough and brutal lot, all too accustomed to the fire and blood of medieval warfare; in fact, it was their reason for existence in the feudal triangle. The peasants worked, the clergy prayed, but the nobility *fought.*

This article presents players with the chance to play feudal rulers of great influence and power, with armies standing at the ready (and the responsibility and danger that comes with that power). The following rules can be used to create noble PCs for a ***GURPS Middle Ages*** or ***Fantasy*** campaign.

Character Creation

The suggested level for land-holding feudal lords is 200 to 300 points, depending on the campaign's power level. This high point total is to compensate for various advantages required of a noble PC. A starting point total of 200 points works well for low-level knights and barons, while dukes and kings require 300 points or more.

The most important advantage for feudal lords is Status; it determines income and station in society, as well as raw political power. The lowest noble is the landed knight, Status 3, and the highest is the king, with Status 7. The higher the noble's Status, the more land and people he rules - landed knights hold the smallest fiefs, while more powerful nobles hold immense fiefdoms (duchies, earldoms or baronies) as large as a quarter of the kingdom.

In addition to Status, other advantages are necessary to recreate the sweeping powers of a feudal noble. The 15-point level of Legal Enforcement Powers is required; nobles could search and seize property, conduct a trial and even execute commoners and freemen. Feudal lords should also have the Legal Immunity advantage (see ***GURPS Compendium I*****,** p. 27) at the 15-point level. Nobles did not answer to common courts, but only to special trials held by other nobles, or the king.

Another item of concern for noble characters is Wealth. A feudal lord could be a poor knight with a few hundred acres of land and a shabby, timber tower, or a rich duke with hundreds of square miles in his domain, with several stone castles and a walled city or two. Noble PCs should be Wealthy or better. A knight of merely Comfort-able wealth would be considered poor by his peers! The more powerful nobles of a kingdom should have Very Wealthy, Filthy Rich or Multimillion-aire, since they must buy great castles and fortresses with their starting wealth.

A character's wealth level should also fit the player's character concept. The GM and player should work together to provide a good reason if there is great disparity between Wealth and Status.

Besides the above requirements, the player has other advantages to consider. Voice, Charisma, Empathy, Reputation (good or bad), Ally or Ally group (such as a circle of knights, a loyal squire or a competent wife), Patron (the noble's liege lord, or a powerful clergyman such as a Bishop or Archbishop) would all be quite useful. Appropriate disadvantages include Ignorance or Uneducated (for commoners who were knighted on the field of battle and haven't been taught noble skills yet, or for lords who cannot fight or ride), as well as Duty. The noble's foremost Duty is to his liege lord. This is a -5 to -10 point disadvantage, depending on the frequency of the call for military service (GMs may adjust this point level if they feel that feudal duty would be different in their campaign). Almost any other disadvantage will work for noble characters, though particularly nasty ones will cause many problems. A noble with Sadism and a dungeon full of prisoners is just asking for trouble! Other appropriate disadvantages for feudal lords include Bad Temper, Bully, Code of Honor, all the various Compulsive Behaviors (Compulsive Spending was very

common), Megalomania, Enemy and Dependents (which could be squires, children, wives, younger siblings, etc.).

Skills useful to a lord include Diplomacy, Intimidation, Tactics, Strategy, Savoir-Faire, Riding, Administration, various Languages, Heraldry, Law, Area Knowledge of personal lands, Leadership, Fast-Talk, Merchant, Bard and Interrogation. Skills such as Falconry, Dancing, Poetry, Gambling, Carousing, Chess, Theology, Philosophy, Calligraphy, Writing, Gardening, History, Appreciate Beauty (horses, armor, and weapons were common specializations), Literature, and Natur-alist might be included in a nobleman's courtly training.

Players and GMs are encouraged to see other ***GURPS*** worldbooks. Some that might help are ***Arabian Nights***, ***Fantasy***, ***Middle Ages***, ***Vikings*** and ***Camelot***. These can add ideas on creating noble characters.

The Fiefdom and the Feudal Lord

In the ***GURPS Basic Set*** it is assumed that at a certain Status level the character has a fiefdom (that is, the character's *title* has lands, not the character himself). This was not always the case in history. Not all lords had the same amount of land; some barons had three times as much land as other barons, and a much higher income as a result. To simulate this, GMs may allow noblemen to buy more land than the default level presented in the Job Table. This should be treated as a special case of the optional temporary wealth rule (see sidebar, p. CI18). For every 15 character points spent, the lord's land holdings are increased by 20%. Thus, for a landed knight with two levels of extra land, his total land holdings would be 2,800 acres of productive land, instead of the default level of 2,000, and his income would be $5,600 a month, not $4,000. This increases the lord's income, but not starting wealth. The GM may also allow nobles to select a similar disadvantage, worth -10 points per level.

Economy, Income and Expenses

The income of a medieval lord depended almost entirely on the produce of his fiefdom. The income levels presented in this article assume that each acre of productive land (whether it be forest for wood and game, fields for agricultural produce, bog for peat or mountains for stone) will produce roughly two ***GURPS*** $ a month in various rents and taxes for the lord; the exact source of monthly income, such as taxes from gristmills, bridges, bakeovens, wine presses, etc., will be left for the GM to determine, if he so desires. In the ***Basic Set***, one ***GURPS*** $ is the equivalent of one copper farthing (at four farthings to a penny, 12 pennies to the shilling and 20 shillings to the pound). Use this conversion rate, rather than the one presented in ***GURPS Middle Ages I***, as it simulates the inflated, high-demand, low-supply economy of the mid-13th and 14th centuries better.

Economics 101

By comparing the Job Table presented here with the one in ***GURPS Fantasy*** or ***Middle Ages***, it is obvious that there is a *tremendous* difference in income between the peasant and his lord, or even a baron and his king. This is historically accurate. The disparity between the poor and the rich has always existed, and is one of the reasons that rebellion was so common. Comparison of the average family income of today with the salary of a multinational, corporate CEO echoes the difference between the peasant and his lord during the Middle Ages.

Expenses: Taking it All Away

The Cost of Living table on p. B191 lists the minimum amount that the lord can spend and still maintain his Status level. This includes the cost for appropriate food and clothing, church tithes, taxes and so on, for the noble and his immediate family. The GM is the final authority on what is or is not included in the listed Cost of Living. If the PC does not pay the Cost of Living for his Status level, the GM should assign the character a Reaction penalty until the

minimum can be paid again. This Reaction penalty should apply to most everyone that knows about the lord's situation, even those of lower Status. Rich merchants will sneer, serfs will be embarrassed or disgusted with their lord's lack of management skills (which almost always means more taxes and work for the serfs), and soldiers may seek employment elsewhere. Eventually the noble's Status will drop permanently if the proper Cost of Living is not paid.

Once the Cost of Living is subtracted from the noble's monthly income, the remainder can be used to pay retainers, soldiers/men-at-arms, bureaucrats and scribes, and for improvements and repairs of the lord's castle or manor house, or for ransoms of captured liege lords, gifts to well-serving friends, dowries for daughters, inheritance for younger sons (or to cover the spending habits of a wife with Compulsive Spending or Generosity), and basically anything else that the GM can come up with. GMs are encouraged to work hard at draining a noble's coffers, and exploiting the economic, social or organizational flaws that a lord may create by refusing to spend income on necessary expenses (like town guards for keeping the peace, or clerks and bureaucrats for collecting taxes and keeping accounts).

A powerful lord will have a great many servants working for him, and will spend most of his income on these servants. Cooks, grooms, blacksmiths, soldiers and so on must be fed and provided for. Serfs and peasants don't count though - only those individuals that work directly for the lord. The lord must pay the Cost of Living for each person that works for him. Ten knights are much more costly to the lord, for instance, than 10 common soldiers; the knights are nobles themselves, and will require the added expense of meat and spices, fine clothes as gifts, and better lodging and mounts. GMs may require that the PC use the wages listed on the various Job Tables as a guide for further compensation as well. The GM is the final authority on this subject, however, because a famine, plague or war in the realm could drive the prices up or down accordingly.

Costs for large purchases should be determined by the GM on a case-by-case situation. A manor house or castle should be paid for from the lord's starting wealth; even though the PC may have inherited the structure, the character must still pay for it from his starting wealth. A timber-framed, wattle and daub peasant house with a thatched roof (perhaps 15' by 45') would cost about $2,500. A large manor house of similar construction, with a timber barbican and various outbuildings, a barn, smokehouse, hen house and so on, might cost $10,000. Lead, slate or tile roofs, stone walls, and glass windows could drive the cost to two or three times this. As a rule, local resources and labor are cheap, but shipping expenses will drive the cost of imported construction materials up very quickly. A large, extensive stone castle should cost at least $50,000, while a simple, three-story stone tower with a slate roof might cost $20,000. Monthly maintenance costs would be about 5% of the total cost of the structure. Furnishings, livestock and tools will cost an additional 50% to 100% of the cost of the structure. Great lords usually had two or three stone castles and several smaller timber forts scattered across their lands.

Those wishing to purchase or build sailing vessels should see the campaign chapter in ***GURPS Vehicles***, or the chapter on sailing vessels in ***GURPS Swashbucklers***.

GMs should note that regardless of the character's wealth level, no more than 20% of his starting wealth may be spent on adventuring gear. This can still be spent quite easily. A fine warhorse, a suit of plate and a good sword can be very costly. The use of a character point for a month's income should be a rare occurrence during the campaign, and no more than two points should be allowed during character creation.

Campaigns

With mighty dukes and earls as characters, the GM must have exciting, well-planned adventures, and a long-term story in mind. The stick-and-carrot approach, using treasure as a lure, will not work with rich nobles. They have almost everything money can buy already! However, the promise of more power and respect, and a larger fiefdom, works just fine. The GM must remember that the PCs *are* the power in the realm. Open threats of force will not scare them, and other blatant, strong-arm tactics are likely to be met with brutality. A subtle game of political cat and mouse, with more lands as the prize, is sometimes a welcome change from open warfare, and a mixture of warfare and political intrigue works best. Below are just a few suggestions for campaign ideas and themes. For other ideas, see the various ***GURPS*** worldbooks.

A Few Good Men: One of the PCs is a baron or duke, and the rest of the party is made up of his liege men, stewards,

sergeant-at-arms or other leaders. These lower-level PCs will act as counselors and military commanders, and assist the liege lord in making and enforcing hard decisions. The campaign should center around the interaction of the various characters as they deal with the adversities of the campaign, which could range from peasant rebellion to bandit raids.

The Conquest: In this type of campaign, the players are low-level barons or landed knights marching off to invade another land. This could be for religious reasons, such as the Crusades, or for more profitable or personal reasons, such as the Hundred Years' War. The GM should become familiar with ***GURPS*** Mass Combat System before beginning this type of campaign. Characters may face ambush, turncoat rebels, plague, famine, massive bloody battles and deadly skirmishes on an almost daily basis.

Rebellion: The lord's lands are in turmoil. Perhaps several castles have been put to the torch in neighboring fiefs, and now an uprising has begun in his own lands. The lord must decide how to deal with the rebels, and then enforce his decision.

Intrigue: The PCs learn of a plot to overthrow the king, but do not have enough information to act on. Should they investigate until they find the truth, or just solidify their position and try for the throne themselves? If they do discover the truth, should they go to the king, or just accept the bribes and keep quiet?

Job Table

All these positions are considered Wealthy jobs, and monthly income will vary with the lord's wealth level.

	Success Roll	***Critical Failure***
Landed Knight (Status 3, any weapon skills totaling 60+, Legal Enforcement Powers (15), Legal Immunity (15), Claim to Hospitality (10), appropriate Duty, Wealthy+, 1,200 acres or more), $2 x acres owned	Best PR	2d/3d, C, lose horse, armor
Baron (Status 4, any weapon skills totaling 60+, Legal Enforcement Powers (15), Legal Immunity (15), Claim to Hospitality (10), appropriate Duty, Wealthy+, 20,000 acres or more), $2 x acres owned	Best PR	-4i, 2d/3d, C, lose title
Earl (Status 5, any weapon skills totaling 60+, Legal Enforcement Powers (15), Legal Immunity (15), Claim to Hospitality (10), appropriate Duty, Wealthy+, 100,000 acres or more), $2 x acres owned	Best PR	-4i, 2d/3d, C, lose title
Duke (Status 6, any weapon skills totaling 60+, Legal Enforcement Powers (15), Legal Immunity (15), Claim to Hospitality (10), appropriate Duty, Wealthy+, 300,000 acres or more), $2 x acres owned	Best PR	-4i, 2d/3d, C, lose title
King (Status 7+, any weapon skills totaling 60+, Legal Enforcement Powers (15), Legal Immunity (15), Claim to Hospitality (10), appropriate Duty, Filthy Rich, 1.2 million acres+), $2 x acres owned	Best PR	-4i, 2d/3d, C, lose title

A *GURPS Goblins* Adventure
by Ed Wisniowski

London has many boweries and neighborhoods. In any of them an aspiring goblin can find an opportunity to succeed. This adventure is for beginning goblins as they make their first efforts to find wealth and happiness, or at least escape the Gutter, in Rigg Quarter.

Rigg Quarter

Just over the Waterloo bridge in the unfashionable section of London's east end is Rigg Quarter. The quarter is a mixed community covering about two square blocks and facing northward toward the Thames river. The people of the quarter always hope for a way to cross over the bridge, but the harsh realities of goblin life get in the way. The primary population of the quarter are marines from his majesty's artillery regiment, with Proles littering the streets. This is the obvious handy work of the troops and their presence. The economy revolves around three individuals.

Gentleman Johnson, who runs a fish mart catering to the leisured gentlefolk and aristocracy across the bridge, is the primary employer. To work for Johnson is a great honor and a fast way to improve your status. Johnson's rival is his old public school classmate Righteous Dagon Dragbottom. He runs the local pawn shop and the entire underground economy in the quarter. Dragbottom is always willing to be your friend for a cost. Many in the quarter call him crude and unseemly. Unfortunately, that does not stop people from using the pawn broker's services for questionable activity. Finally, Col. Ebiasaph Pitt is the commander of the marine barracks. Not only does he keep his men in top fighting shape, he also makes sure that Johnson and Dragbottom's sparring doesn't break out into open fighting in the streets. After all, he is a gentleman and has an entire regiment of marines with rifles and cannons to keep the peace.

People in the quarter work for Dragbottom or Johnson, or enlist to become marines. Anyone else either winds up in the Gutter or escapes to become famous and wealthy. Other features in the quarter include four major night spots for the residents. The Bloody Bucket is usually reserved for working people and gutter trash. Marines are under strict orders to stay out of this establishment. Instead, they are welcomed at a place called the Eagle Claw, which is much more respectable and owned by the former first sergeant of the regiment. Marines and working people rub elbows and make plans for the future at the Claw. Officers and gentlefolk expect outstanding service from Jezebel's Social Club, where a card game can last all night and the blood pudding always tastes better with a spot of gin. Finally, there is the Twilight Slumbers Hotel. Marines on leave always make a stop here to soothe their frayed nerves and enjoy the company of a "proper lady." In spite of its scandalous reputation, the women of the quarter tolerate its presence because it prevents harassment by King George's uncouth marines.

With Johnson closest to the bridge on the west side of the quarter and Dragbottom across from him on the east, scattered between them are the rooming houses, flats and slums that make up a majority of the quarter. The Marine barracks and the more upscale housing is in the southern section near the top of a large hill. Both Johnson and Dragbottom, along with the marines, live here. Each morning at six, the barracks has taps and the rest of the quarter awakens. The marines will get moving about nine-thirty once the hangovers wear off. At noon six days a week, the

Colonel has a parade down the main street of the quarter. The climax is a 500-pound brass cannon ridden down the hill by a crew of adventurous artillerists and fired into the Thames. Life in Rigg Quarter may be squalid, but it is certainly not boring.

What Is Going On?

Johnson, over the years, has been cultivating contacts with the upper classes and overcharging them for seafood. Now, he is prepared to take the final step into the aristocracy with a knighthood and a plot of land outside the city. Naturally, this makes Drag-bottom furious, and he will do everything he can to foil his old rival's plans. The problem is that a recent jewel theft by one of Dragbottom's henchmen has gone terribly wrong and he has been forced to behave himself. In the meantime, the unscrupulous pawn shop owner has been hiding jewels in the one place no one cares to look - in Johnson's smelly fish warehouse.

Johnson has discovered this and has decided to use the loot for himself to bribe his way into a knighthood. This is where the players' goblins come in. Since they will be unemployed and easily influenced, Johnson will hire them as delivery people. They will deliver a load of fish to a snotty aristocrat who will find the jewels and a note stating Johnson's intentions. The bribe should work and Johnson will become a knight in less than a fortnight. Considering goblin luck, Johnson and the delivery boys will lose a little sleep before that happens.

Mustering Day

September 1st is always a special day in Rigg Quarter, because all of the trade guilds graduate their apprentices from service and the enlistments all expire from Marine regiment. Col. Pitt grants leave to most of the marines at the barracks and a huge drunken party ensues at the Eagle Claw as comrades in arms say good-bye to each other. The apprentices also begin looking for work that isn't there. By the end of this night, the discouraged workers wind up in the Eagle Claw drinking to forget their dismal prospects. This is an ideal chance to get the PC goblins together and introduce them to Rigg Quarter. If they were once servants, none of the gentlefolk or aristocracy will hire them. Former soldiers or marines will be ignored by potential employers. Even pickpockets and rat catchers will find employment opportunities lacking.

As the unemployed goblins get more drunk (see the ***Goblins*** drinking rules), they should realize they don't have a place to sleep for the night. The Twilight Slumbers has no vacancy and they could not afford the four shilling a night rent. The rooming houses are full and most landlords will turn the wretches away because they are drunk.

This is when the PCs should get a good look at Dragbottom and his men. Stumbling back from a tenement to the bar, they witness an ugly incident. Four goblins are holding down a victim while a rumpled, blue-skinned goblin in fine clothes begins heating up a bucket of pitch.

"So, Amos," asks the blue-skinned Goblin, "why don't I have the jewels yet?"

"Honest, Dragbottom," says the helpless goblin, "I left them in the warehouse like you said and they're gone!"

"I hate people that lie," says the fellow mixing the molten pitch, "and I really hate people that muck things up."

"Please Dragbottom, I'll get the jewels in a week."

"You'd better, or I might do something really bad. Turn him over."

With that, the four thugs roll over the poor victim and the blue-skinned goblin paints his behind with the pitch. Once they are finished, they throw the poor soul into the river and walk away. If the witnessing goblins are smart, they will try to get away without being noticed.

If they are noticed, Dragbottom gives them enough shillings to find room and board for the night and a bottle of gin to keep quiet. Goblin luck will smile favorably on them regardless, because a drunken goblin will pass out on the street in

front of the group; he will have enough money on him to pay room and board for the night.

At the Eagle Claw

The next day, the PCs are very hung over and suffering mightily. Making matters worse, there isn't any work. Since it is the day after mustering day, the citizens of the quarter are a lot less understanding of homeless laborers pestering them for jobs. If our heroes get too eager looking for work, someone will call the constable to chase them away. Dragbottom isn't working at the pawn shop today, and if the goblins want to see him they will be flatly refused. Further inquiries will result in the nosy ones being beaten up by Dragbottom's thugs, who love whacking unemployed Gutter scum. All roads lead back to the Eagle Claw and a chance to drown their sorrows.

At the Eagle Claw, they recognize a familiar figure. It is the goblin that passed out the night before in front of them. Talking with the bartender will reveal that he is Gentleman Johnson's footman - Peter "Lightweight" Rumbub. The suffering goblin has a very bad hangover and is trying to enjoy a meal with little success. He turns a bloodshot eye in the direction of the PCs and calls them over.

"I say," he says, "You're those chaps that helped me last night. Join me for some dinner, won't you?"

As the name implies, Rumbub is not a very good drinker, but the goblins find out that he does indeed work for Johnson. Since they were so good to help him last night, Rumbub will help them find work in the fish market and buy them dinner. The evening soon turns into a small feast for the goblins (who haven't eaten all day), and the future looks much brighter. After dinner and several pints of beer, they notice another goblin walk into the Eagle Claw. His bottom is covered in pitch and he has two small thugs at his side. His attitude is about as bad as his appearance as the others in the pub begin to laugh at his misfortune.

Rumbub finishes his ale and jokes, "That's Dragbottom's best thief, Sneaky Amos Cutbirth. Stay away from him. He doesn't look like much but he's plenty mean."

When someone from the group fetches a round of drinks (or if some other excuse presents itself), he bumps into Cutbirth, spilling his beer. Cutbirth, who has already had a bad 24 hours, throws a tantrum and threatens the PCgoblins. "Look at my coat," he says "You ruined it!" Apologizing will only make him angrier.

Instead of whacking the offending street scum and his companions, Cutbirth challenges him to a friendly wager to pay for the cleaning. The game is conkers, and the rest of the pub starts taking side bets on the game. The bartender produces two walnuts and some yarn. The rules are simple - the players drill a hole in the walnuts and then thread the yarn through the hole. After that is done, the participants beat their opponents over the heads with the makeshift flail until one of the nuts breaks. It is a simple contest that is very entertaining for those who watch. For the participants, it can be a little painful.

Treat a conker as a small flail that does Swing +1 damage. Each conker has a DR of 4 and 5 hit points. Once a conker takes more damage than hit points, it shatters and that player loses. A roasted conker has a DR of 6. Treat the game as a normal combat with each blow landing on the opponent's head and don't forget to figure in the DR of 2 for goblin skulls. On a critical success, roll on the critical head blow table. Killing a foe playing conkers is very unsporting, but knocking him out usually forces the opponent to forfeit the match. Only three people this year have been hanged for killing someone playing conkers, so the goblins have that going for them.

If the PC goblin wins, they collect about six shillings from Cutbirth and two rounds of drinks from other patrons in the bar that won side bets. If he loses, Rumbub will give Cutbirth the money to clean his clothes.

No matter what the outcome of the match, Rumbub is impressed and takes the player and his colleagues to see Johnson that same evening.

An Offer You Can't Refuse

Compared with the smoky and dark surroundings of the Claw, Jezebel's Social Club is heaven on earth. The parlor is well lit. The women are dressed in the latest fashions. Everyone has bathed and the club has a huge buffet with a wide selection of deserts. Best of all, the food is free! Unfortunately, everything else has a steep price. The card tables are filled with leisured gentlefolk gambling their fortunes away. Respectable women are providing necessary escort service and the drink prices would make the ordinary goblin on the street nauseous. This is how the better half lives and the PCs are homeless, hungry, drunk, and sore if coming out of the conkers match. Normally, Gutter folk like them would not even be allowed near the front door of an establishment like Jezebel's. The doorman to the club and the valet sniff in disgust as they are escorted inside. Only Rumbub's presence prevents them from being thrown out on the street like trash. Rumbub leaves his guests at the bar while he gets his master out of the poker room.

After a brief wait or a round of outrageously priced drinks, Johnson walks up. He is a green, warty fellow with a nose that looks like it has been broken a few times during childhood rugby games. "My footman tells me you played conkers with Cutbirth and didn't get killed," he says.

Now it is up to the goblins to beg Johnson for a job. Rumbub won't speak any more for the goblins. Fast-Talk and Bard will help sway Johnson. Considering that Johnson is winning at the poker tables and is in a good mood, they receive an additional +2 bonus to their roll. If they are successful, Johnson will pay for their bar tab, hire them on the spot and put them up for the night. If they fail, Johnson has them thrown out of the club and they are forced to fend for themselves. All is not lost though, if the characters are forced to spend the night in the streets; Rumbub gives them his card and tells them to try again tomorrow at the fish mart. Johnson will be sober and might be a little more receptive. Either way, the unfortunate souls are free to steal some food from the buffet so they will not go hungry for the night.

The Fish Mart

Depending on how the meeting with Johnson went the night before, the goblins either wake up in the rooming house across the street from the fish mart, or they find themselves outside the gates with the other Gutter folk, looking for work. What both experiences have in common is that the market gives off an unhealthy stench that would make even the healthiest goblin want to give up his breakfast. Most of the people who work at the market have lost their sense of smell and consider it a blessing, as barges bring putrid crates of fish to the warehouse to be processed, iced and shipped to the upper classes.

Johnson's market does not open to the public until 10:30, but work begins at 8:00 and Johnson arrives at 9:30 to over-see his operations. If the PCgoblins are hired they will be let into the gates and given basic training on how to drive a coach and deliver fish. If they are still unemployed, they are let in by Rumbub who presents them to his master one final time. Johnson is impressed by their pluck (or stupidity) and has a perfect job for them. They are to deliver a load of fish to Lord Carpetbagger by 12:30. He lives on the west end and hates late shipments. If they don't get the shipment to Carpetbagger's on time, he will fire them and make sure that no one in Rigg Quarter will ever hire them for legitimate work. It is an offer they can't refuse, unless they enjoy living in the Gutter poor and penniless. The new hires are given a map and written instructions on how to get to Carpetbagger's. Since most goblins are illiterate, it should be fun trying to understand them. The two-horse carriage holds three crates of fish and has enough room for the party.

Getting over the Waterloo bridge should be a challenge, and then negotiating the streets of London's west end should also be difficult. It will take a combination of a successful Navigation or Area Knowledge roll to find Carpetbagger's place. The PCs receive an additional +2 if one of them can read and understand the map. Due to goblin jingoism, they would normally be at a -4 to do anything outside Rigg Quarter. Since they are working for Johnson, all of their rolls are made at even up.

Once the navigation roll is made, they next have to make a successful roll against Riding or Teamster to make sure the cart is traveling fast enough to make it to Carpetbag-ger's. A failed result will mean that they have violated the traffic laws and answer to the police, or worse: the horses will run wild and take the carriage on a frantic ride through the streets, resulting in an accident spilling goblins and fish all over the street. Time is precious and the clock is ticking. What they do not know is that Cutbirth is planing an ambush for them. They also have over 10,000 pounds' worth of diamonds hidden inside the belly of a large tuna in one of the crates.

The Ambush

As the delivery carriage makes a turn into a narrow alley, an apple cart is pushed into the middle of the road blocking the way. A simple Riding roll is all it takes to avoid the collision. If the carriage's driver fails and hits the apple cart, Cutbirth and his goblins will attack. If he avoids the obstacle, Cutbirth and his gang will jump from roof tops onto the speeding fish delivery. The ambushers are armed with clubs and ice picks. All they really want is the fish. Whacking the delivery boys is a bonus. The PCs are outnumbered three to two and only have improvised weapons. The fight should still be interesting, with plenty of dirty tricks and pratfalls. GMs are encouraged to give extra experience points for especially dirty tricks or theatrical fight moves. The fight climaxes with the arrival of the local police, who chase off the attackers. Time their appearance so that they're just a hair too late - the ambush should succeed and Cutbirth make off with the jewels. The police will return the battered carriage to Johnson and the fish mart.

Confronted with his plan's failure, Johnson will be very upset. He will be so angry that he will start whacking the PCs with his walking cane right in front of the constables. Since he is in a position of authority, all the guttertrash goblins can do is take a few more lumps. Once the swelling stops and Johnson calms down, it is time to weigh options - and none of them are very good.

Decisions, Decisions

A messenger from Dragbottom will arrive at the fish market at about the same time that Johnson gets done wielding his cane. The unscrupulous pawn-shop owner always enjoys getting maximum profit from all of his ventures, so he is willing to sell back the jewels at twice the cost a fence would offer him. Johnson can still make the bribe and earn his title, but Dragbottom would get a cut of the booty. Johnson is furious, but he is not stupid. He tells the messenger to set up a time after the market closes so that the money and jewels can be exchanged. He has no intention of honoring the deal.

"You miserable trash have a chance to redeem yourselves," he says. "When Dragbottom and his men arrive you will whack them, take back the jewels, and paint pitch on that scoundrel's bottom and throw him in the river."

Faced with starvation and homelessness, the goblins have no choice but to be part of Johnson's plan. If they don't he will throw them out of the market and blacklist them.

Fish Fight at the Fish Mart

The fish mart closes to the public after 4:30 in the afternoon. The meeting has been set up for six that evening. This gives the heroes time to bind their wounds and get ready for the upcoming brawl. If they're typical goblins, they will be drinking and quite drunk before the coming conflict, but that just might give them just enough edge to survive all this craziness. They will work with other members of Johnson's staff, including his personal rent-a-thugs and warehouse goblins Izri and Slashlip. These two huge goblins are strong, tough and about as intelligent as the dead fish they load into the carriages. Drunkenness fails to make them any more pleasant to be around, and their conversation about the odor of rancid mackerel being better than fresh tuna should make the PCs wonder how they ever became mixed up with Johnson in the first place.

Johnson, Izri and Slashlip have the money. The PCs wait in ambush, and Rumbub (with some friends) will serve as reinforcements. The plan is simple: Johnson will make the exchange, and then Izri and Slashlip will whack Dragbottom and his men while the new employees ambush them from behind. If all goes well, Johnson will have the money,

the jewels and the satisfaction of whacking Dragbottom. The knighthood is just icing on the cake.

Dragbottom suspects that Johnson has plans for him, so he has rounded up all of his men in the quarter to join him on the trip. What results is the makings of a riot in the fragrant marketplace.

Dragbottom has armed his men with clubs. Johnson has giant fish hooks, clubs, nets and crates of fish. It should be a fairly even matchup. Once the fight breaks out, it is every goblin for himself. Crates of fish will be broken over skulls. Hooks should wind up in unpleasant places and everyone should be battered and bloody. During the confusion, the PCs should be able to find Cutbirth and try to settle a few scores. He should be easy to spot because he is wrapped up in bandages and using a large tuna for a weapon. He is armed with one of the fish taken during the ambush. Smacking one of Johnson's men, his fish bursts open and diamonds spill out onto the cobblestones of the market. This makes the fight even more frenzied as greedy goblins fight boot and nail to get a piece of the treasure.

The chaos could easily spill out of the marketplace and into the streets. Shop windows are broken. Innocents are caught up in the fray and the card game at Jezebel's is disturbed. Constables soon arrive on the scene and make a bad situation even worse. A general alarm is sounded and troops with rifles and cannon show up from the barracks, with Pitt personally leading his marines. A few shots are fired. When the smoke clears, Dragbottom's men have run, the fish market is a mess, Johnson has his money and about 5,000 pounds' worth of diamonds are still lying on the ground.

The marine officer wants an explanation because he never misses his wife's home cooking and by the time this is finished it will be cold. Johnson uses all the Fast-Talk and Bard skills that he can muster to try and get himself off the hook. Eying the diamonds scattered on the ground, Pitt gets an idea.

"I say old chap, I have a game of bridge with Lord Carpetbagger tomorrow night. He won't at all be pleased if I tell him about this mess at the fish mart tonight."

"How can I can convince you to give his lordship a favorable report?" Johnson says.

"Well, my wife does like jewelry."

"Damn it, Ebiasaph! Take them, but don't say a word to his lordship."

"Right, come on men. Let's go, dinner is getting cold."

With that, Pitt collects the rest of the jewels and the troops leave the market. Johnson is no better or worse for the experience. Dragbottom has lost face and Cutbirth can expect another bath in the Thames River. The PCgoblins are maimed, bloody and terrified, but at least they have a job, which is nice.

Aftermath

Johnson will spend the next few weeks repairing the damage to the fish mart and will continue making seafood shipments to the upper classes. He knows he lost a chance at earning a knighthood, but the possibility is still open for a future attempt so long as Pitt keeps his mouth shut. Each day Johnson sends a fresh load of fish to the barracks with an envelope of cash. Dragbottom has lost face due to the whole misadventure and lies low, trying to figure out what to do next. He has future plans for Johnson and the street wretches that helped him out; he just hasn't figured them out yet. Cutbirth has disappeared and many suspect that he is at the bottom of the Thames.

The heroes have earned a spot on Johnson's fish delivery team. Since they were so good to help the aspiring aristocrat, the least he can do is give them a living wage and a place to work. As winter settles into London, life returns to usual and the delicate balance of power in the quarter is restored. Plots and counterplots have clashed and thanks to goblin luck no one has come out ahead except the PCs, who have a job and a chance for further adventure in Rigg Quarter.

Running Gags

Life in Rigg Quarter is unpredictable. These running gags are designed to provide some comic relief and distraction. They can happen anytime during the adventure or during a slow period when everyone needs a cheap laugh.

Artillery Practice: Each day at noon, the marines at the barracks conduct artillery practice after the parade. Usually four goblins ride down the main street with a 500-pound siege cannon between their legs. Bystanders have learned to get out of the way. Those who don't suffer 4d6 of crushing damage from being run over. Once the cannon rolls down the hill and reaches the river, the goblin artillerists prime the gun and then fire it into the river. Usually, the goblins will shoot a cabbage into the river but if there is a luckless prole convenient, the poor creature will be fired out of the gun instead. Any prole so mistreated will be burned completely black and hairless (+2 to Menace) and rendered Hard of Hearing. Once the exercise is over, it's lunch time in the quarter. All the shops close while their proprietors get drunk and enjoy their meals.

A Woman Scorned: During a particularly slow part of the adventure, those walking by a set of shops overhear a horrible argument.

"But, dear!"

"Don't but me, you spend more time drinking gin than working."

"But, dear!"

"How are you going to make the rent?"

"But, dear -"

With that there is a crash of glass and a goblin explodes out of a glass window above the shop. The poor soul lands with a sickening thud, and it is obvious he has broken a shoulder. The injured goblin brushes himself off, gives a toothless smile and says, "I guess I'd better be getting to work." He then pulls out a flask of gin and takes a hard swig before limping down the street to find work.

Ben the Beggar: Usually found outside the Bloody Bucket, Ben is a pathetic figure in Rigg Quarter. The poor goblin has been begging for food, liquor and money for as long as anyone can remember. Ben lost his hands and legs in a machine accident. Presently, he is missing most of his teeth and is infected with scarlet fever. "Come on mate, just a penny or shilling for a lost soul," he says.

Most people ignore Ben. Those that are mean to the beggar usually contract his latest disease or suffer from a mysterious accident. Treat this as an extra (-3) to contagion rolls when checking for disease. If people give Ben a shilling or better they will automatically receive the blessing of good goblin luck, which is left to the discretion of the GM. Ben may be pathetic, but he is also a good luck charm for any adventurer in Rigg Quarter.

Who's Who in Rigg Quarter

Gentleman Johnson (Status 4)
Big but weak, green-skinned, warty, with a broken nose.
ST 7, DX 8, IQ 11, HT 14
Courage 7
Basic Speed 5.5, Move 5
Dodge 5
Advantages: Menace +1.
Disadvantages: Gigantism, Odious Personal Habit: High Living, Severe Alcoholism, Scotophobia.
Quirks: Broken nose.
Skills: Sex Appeal-14, Club (his cane)-10, Engineering- 11, Brawling-10, Pickpocket- 8, Merchant-11.

Righteous Dagon Dragbottom (Status 1)
Very strong. Blue-skinned, in unkempt finery.

ST 13, DX 9, IQ 8, HT 9
Courage 13
Basic Speed 4.5, Move 4
Dodge 4
Advantages: Menace +1, Strong Will +2.
Disadvantages: Agoraphobia, Severe Alcoholism, Short Arms.
Skills: Starglazing-10, Stealth-9, Holdout-11, Pickpocket-11, Traps-8, Animal Handling-10, Merchant-10, Intuition-10.

Col. Ebiasaph Pitt (Status 4)
Gangly, completely bald and resplendent in his uniform.
ST 10, DX 10, IQ 10, HT 10
Courage 10
Basic Speed 5, Move: 5
Dodge 5
Advantages: Gigantism, Strong Will +2.
Disadvantages: Compulsive Lying, Necrophilia.
Skills: Carousing-10, Brawling-12, Sword-11, Cannon-10, Traps-10, Pistol-10.

Amos Cutbirth (Status -3)
Stupid but vicious.
ST 5, DX 14, IQ 7, HT 9
Courage 7
Basic Speed 5.75, Move 5
Dodge 5
Advantage: Exceptionally Long Legs.
Disadvantages: Ugly, Unluck, Acrophobia.
Skills: Climbing-14, Lockpick-14, Gambling-8, Swimming-12, Forgery-10.

Peter "Lightweight" Rumbub (Status 0)
ST 12, DX 8, IQ 12, HT 6
Courage 12
Basic Speed: 3.5, Move 3
Dodge 3
Advantage: Night Vision.
Disadvantages: Odious Personal Habit: Overtly Friendly.
Quirk: Alcohol Intolerance.
Skills: Traps-12, Sword-9, Cook-12, Club-10.

Ben the Beggar (Status -4)
Infected with scarlet fever.
ST 4, DX 9, IQ 10, HT 10
Courage 7
Basic Speed: 4.75, Move 4
Dodge 4
Advantage: Luck.
Disadvantages: No Hands, No Legs, Weirdness Magnet.
Skills: Panhandler-10, Theology-10, Carousing-10.

Izri (Status -2)
ST 14, DX 10, IQ 7, HT 10
Courage 14
Basic Speed 5, Move 5
Dodge 5

Advantages: Strong Will +2, Exceptionally Long Arms.
Disadvantages: Berserk, Aquaphobia
Skills: Brawling-12, Club-12, Teamster-9.

Slashlips (Status -2)
ST 14, DX 12, IQ 7, HT 11
Courage 14
Basic Speed 5.75, Move 5
Dodge 5
Advantages: Toughness (DR 2), Fur.
Disadvantages: Overconfidence, Necrophobia.
Skills: Brawling-12, Club-12, Teamster-9.

Police (Status 0)
ST 12, DX 12, IQ 10, HT 10
Courage 12
Basic Speed: 5.5, Move 5
Dodge 5
Advantage: Toughness (DR 1).
Disadvantages: Ugly, No Sense of Humor.
Skills: Club-12, Criminology-10, Law-10.

Marines (Status 0)
ST 11, DX 11, IQ 9, HT 11
Courage 11
Basic Speed: 5.5, Move 5
Dodge 5
Disadvantage: Severe Alcoholism.
Skills: Rifle-11, Sword-11, Cannon-10.

Johnson's Thugs (Status -2)
ST 10, DX 12, IQ 9, HT 9
Courage 10
Basic Speed 5.25, Move 5
Dodge 5
Advantage: Menace +1.
Disadvantages: Gigantism, Post Combat Shakes.
Skills: Brawling-13, Teamster-9, Club-12.

Dragbottom's Thugs (Status -4)
ST 10, DX 10, IQ 8, HT 11
Courage 10
Basic Speed: 5.25, Move 5
Dodge 5
Disadvantage: Berserk
Skills: Brawling-12, Club-12.

Bystanders (Status Variable)
ST 10, DX 10, IQ 8, HT 10
Courage 10
Basic Speed 5, Move 5
Dodge 5
Skill: Brawling-11.

by John M. Ford and Phil Masters
Illustrations by Paul Kidby

It is a peculiarity of life on the Discworld that the local magical field just loves to literalize metaphors and concretize beliefs. If people believe in the Tale of the Choking Doberman, big dogs are going to be coughing up fingers all over the place. If enough people talk about a person's being "chased by his own shadow," he better not turn around on a sunny day.

And if people start to believe that someone is Born to Rule, then with time more people will start to notice how regal he looks, and sooner or later he will probably be raised to the leadership of something, even if it's just Scout Leader of the Badger Patrol. If they begin to believe that someone is Touched by the Power of the Gods - well, it takes a lot more belief to get any practical effects out of that one, but don't be surprised if Dreams are Dreamed and Visions are Seen. Most Discworld divinities started out as Small Gods who got either smart or lucky - see ***GURPS Discworld*** for details - but it should be theoretically possible to acquire divinity of a sort from another starting point. There are certainly plenty of human prophets who are assumed to have god-given powers.

This can have an interesting application for game purposes, if the GM and players are prepared to run with the peculiar consequences of a character's acquiring an Aura in the public eye. Such effects can be permanent or temporary; of course, if they are permanent, they represent a character advantage:

Aura of Majesty/Divinity 10/15 points/level

Acquiring an Aura advantage requires some kind of special event in your past. For Majesty, this is usually not "royal birth," or the equivalent thereof. But someone being in the right place at the right time - preferably but not necessarily with some level of Charisma - was the foundation of a lot more Disc monarchies than the official records like to admit. (See the ending of *Wyrd Sisters.*) Divinity generally calls for something miraculous, or perceived as miraculous - a savage beast became calm when you appeared, a thunderstorm seemed to dissolve at your presence. It is not necessary that these events be miraculous. It is not even necessary that they really happened. The important part is that they are believed to be so, by a sufficient number of people.

"Sufficient" is a highly flexible term - one person, with absolutely pure faith, has been sufficient to keep a god alive, if not mighty. For a general rule:

One level of Aura = 100 or fewer believers

Two levels = 100-1,000 believers

Three levels = 1,000-10,000 believers

Both types of Aura should be limited to three levels for PCs. For the benefit to be permanent, the followers must be permanently attached to the character; unless they are an especially unimpressive crowd, at least some of them will qualify as an Ally Group with a high frequency of appearance, and must be bought as such (and when they aren't around, the Aura may vanish or dim). Others are very likely to qualify as Dependents (worth Disadvantage points).

For every 10 points in *Aura of Majesty,* you get one level of Charisma; you also gain Leadership skill of 12, plus bonuses from Charisma. If you have spent points on Leadership skill, or have a default level higher than 12, then it gains the Charisma bonus, and an additional +2 per level of Aura. You also gain a temporary increase in Status equal to your Aura level, and Savoir-Faire at IQ, both only apply when your followers are present, or with people who know about them; admired leaders are perforce treated with respect. And you gain a bonus equal to your level of Aura to resist spells, psionic powers or use of skills that are being used to make you do anything that diminishes your monarchical dignity, humiliates you or *clearly* threatens the interests of your followers.

An *Aura of Divinity* allows the wearer to perform miracles - small miracles, their actual power depending on the number of believers and the strength of their belief. Note that most believers will probably not think that the person with the Aura is literally a God in human form; they imagine that he is a person temporarily inhabited by Divine Power, or a prophet given certain Divine gifts.

The possibilities of miracles are so broad, and this advantage so easy for a player to misuse, that the actual power granted must be determined by the GM to fit the storyline. As a guideline, for each level of Aura, the character has one die of magical energy points per day. These may be used all at once, or spread out in little 1-point thunderboltettes. Major miracles, like making a single order of Klatchian takeaway feed a multitude, would use up at least a full day's power, and probably "burn out" the avatar for the next several days. Like intelligent spellcasting, the power may be used in creatively efficient ways. Diverting a river might be beyond one's direct power - but triggering a talus-slide that was about to happen anyway, so the rocks block the river and force it to seek a new course, might not be.

The character does not have to know any "spells," and can produce almost any effect he can think of and muster the power for. This is divine power we're talking about, after all. However, believers - the ones supplying the power - also have expectations. A fire god who does a lot of water tricks risks losing believers, and with them, power. If things go far enough, the congregation may decide that they should really be following the water god who's been doing all this good stuff for them, and where will the Prophet of Pyro the Mighty be then?

(However, kings and avatars have it easier than true gods, who can actually *die* if they lose their following, rather than merely possibly being killed for being a disappointment. Again, see ***GURPS Discworld*.**)

It is also possible to acquire an Aura for the very short term - a rumor of kingship, or wave of Belief, that lasts for the duration of an adventure, usually until a threat is over. (This is strongly recommended as the only way to deal with an Aura of Divinity.) Such an Aura is assigned by the GM as part of the plot of an adventure, and taken away when it ends. Such a temporary Aura costs no points.

Playing it Out

There are two basic ways for a character with an Aura to find life going; successfully and unsuccessfully. There are also two basic states of mind for them to adopt, willing and unwilling.

An unsuccessful character is easier for practical game purposes, of course; the GM doesn't have to worry about a PC acquiring ludicrous levels of power and authority. It is also easy to handle in comedy games, especially if the PC is all too willing to try and exploit his or her status; there's nothing easier than leading the overconfident into pratfalls. Unwilling monarchs and deities can also generate plenty of comedy; see the movie *Monty Python's Life of Brian* for illustration.

Really successful ascents to power are less blatantly funny, but generate a lot more complex plot possibilities (which can include comedy). Remember, this is power and authority based, not on ability or entitlement, but on others' expectations - and the higher the character rises, the more other people will expect from them. If they seem to be

enjoying themselves, the GM can load them down with requests and demands from their followers. (The only snag with this is that it may make things hard for other PCs, who may not share either the power or the megalomania, but the roleplaying involved in keeping a friend or ally under control could be amusing.) Less-willing characters finding themselves turning into great leaders or prophets will also suffer stress, although they are less likely to deserve it; GMs should probably give such characters the chance to take occasional breaks, else authentic roleplaying could lead the character to crack up.

(Of course, even unwilling leaders can sometimes attempt to impose their own ideas of what is right or rational on their followers; as ***GURPS Discworld*** describes, the current king and queen of Lancre are unwilling but respected, and their attempts to modernize the place are achieving mixed results.)

Temporary Auras permit all of the above, but on a less permanent basis that leaves characters in a position to handle situations merely as best they can, and then (probably) to walk away. The following scenario seed is a case in point.

Scenario Seed: Deity for a Night

As a traveling PC party passes through an isolated village where there have been a series of monster attacks, bad enough that the coming harvest may not be brought in, an incident occurs that causes the villagers to believe that one of the travelers has divine (not plain ol' magic - *divine*) powers. This gives the PC a temporary Aura of Divinity (see above).

The nature of the incident can depend on specific campaign details, but for a couple of examples:

- In exchange for food and a barn to sleep in, the party agrees to help guard the village approaches. At some late hour, something approaches across a misty bog. Maybe it's the monster, maybe it's a shadow. One of our heroes steps forward to see, and is suddenly wrapped in a flare of light, and the whatever-it-is goes away. The villagers instantly decide that the "burning man" is an avatar of their Harvest God, come to deliver them from the monster in time to save the crops.

What really happened is that a spark struck from a stone by the PC's weapon ignited a puff of swamp gas. Now, the villagers know about swamp gas and open lights, and when the crisis is over, they'll remember this - but for now, they are *desperate*.

- During a stop in the village tavern, which is completely out of beer due to the monster problem, the PCs must

settle for the bad swamproot tea that everyone else is drinking. On the second round, everyone notices that they are drinking beer - pretty good beer at that. The rumor immediately arises that the strangers have transformed tea into beer, and one of them . . . etc.

In reality, as the party will probably discover sooner or later, the innkeeper, knowing that the village desperately needs heartening, tapped the hidden keg of beer he had been saving for just before they all starved this coming winter. If the PCs figure this out early, the innkeeper will make the same point about saving the crops; if they don't want the responsibility, all he has to do is reveal the trick, and they can go on their way, and the villagers will either starve or be killed fighting the monster.

It's not like anyone said being a hero should be easy.

In either case, the power of the Aura should be limited to what is necessary to defeat the monster, with (this being the Discworld) some comic side-effects, like the real ability to turn swamproot tea into beer. The monster may be a real big-red-eyes-and-bad-manicure critter, or something scary but natural like a pack of rabid wolves, or a grudge-bearing villager in a monster suit (the If-It-Wasn't-For-You-Pesky-Kids Option). In Return of the Guns of the Magnificent Seven Samurai style, the idea of getting the villagers psyched to fight is probably more important than the actual supernatural stuff.

In any case, after the monster is defeated, the Aura of Divinity fades. If the players behaved heroically, of course, *that's* permanent - a permanent part of history.

Gothic Surf Shop, by Mike Kelly

John picked up his surfboard. As was his usual custom, he headed for the beach. Big waves were predicted today, would last maybe a week. John touched his board in the middle, just a little tap, and watched the device he had installed pop out. He felt the sharpness of the blade; it protruded a good 12 inches from the front of his board. This weapon made him feel better about what he was going to do. Surfing in the morning was not an intelligent thing to do, especially before the sun came up. The radio and paper was full of stories about surfers who were found out there in the ocean, not quite whole any more. John knew that with this weapon attached to the front of his surfboard he had nothing to worry about at all. He recalled what the picture of one of these dead surfers had looked like in the holocube. Real dead. Parts missing. Two punch marks in the neck as if a vampire had bitten him. The look of painful death in his eyes. A real painful death. John was convinced that he would not die this way. Somewhere in the distance the roar of the surf could be heard. It was time to go ride the waves . . .

This adventure for ***GURPS Cyberpunk*** centers around the grisly death of John, who never returns from his morning surf. John should be a friend or other acquaintance of the PCs of a sort that will make them feel obligated to become involved when what is left of him washes up on shore in Huntington Beach, California. Characters of 150 points are assumed. Useful advantages would be Danger Sense and Intuition. Useful skills would be weapons skills, Streetwise, Swimming and Sports (Surfing).

Sports (Surfing) Physical/Average
Defaults to DX-5
This is the ability to ride a surfboard standing up on an ocean wave. A roll must be made every 10 minutes (or every hazardous situation); a failed roll means that you fall off your board. A Swimming roll should be made if the surfer does fall off. No roll is needed for riding small waves while on your stomach.

The first clue of John's cause of death would be the two puncture wounds in his neck - classic vampire stuff. The other wounds could be explained by gunfire and the use of edged weapons. A major clue is the grisly bat carved into his left ankle.

The adventurers probing into John's death should eventually come around to inquiring with the main street gang in the area (and John's fellow nocturnal surfers), the Surf Nazis. They rule the beach with a combination of brute force and firearms. They number about 10, own a beat-up surf van painted black, and are known for their weapon skills. They are armed with machine pistols and stun wands (***GURPS Cyberpunk,*** p. 44 and p. 46).

The Surf Nazis are best known for their expert surfing, and for handling nearly all situations with violence. The details of John's murder and the grisly symbol carved into his ankle do not match their modus operandi, however. If someone successfully combines Streetwise with Fast-Talk, the Surf Nazis will turn out to be better sources of local rumors and other information than suspects.

The Golden Bear

After the investigators question (or even gain the trust of) the Surf Nazis, they should notice (or have pointed out to them) that the symbol carved into John's ankle is gang related. The most likely gang would be the "Carmirita" - an all-girl punk gang that only comes out to play at night. Their usual hangout is a dive called the Golden Bear. The players

are warned that these "ladies" must be handled with extreme caution.

When the heroes investigate the Golden Bear, have someone make a Danger Sense roll. If the roll is successful, tell them that the place makes their skin crawl.

The Golden Bear is located on Main Street, near the ocean. It is an old two-story brick building standing alone about 20 feet from Jack's Surf Board shop. The condition of the building is not good - it has a look of almost Gothic horror about it, definitely out of place compared to the strip mall across the street. If the adventurers show good sense, they will approach the building in the daytime.

The front door of the Golden Bear is locked, and a sign states that normal business hours are from 6:30 p.m. to 4:00 a.m. In smaller writing can be made out "from dusk to dawn only," scrawled in a blood-red liquid. All entrances to the building are securely locked: a roll against Lockpicking skill will be needed to break in.

Inside the Golden Bear, all is pitch-black (total darkness). If the PCs bring a flashlight, they can navigate around the inside of the building with ease. If the group does not bring along any kind of light, have them make a roll against DX at -5 every turn that anyone tries to navigate around in the utter darkness. If they fail, a fall will do 1d-3 cr damage.

The inside of the building is in little better shape than the outside. Rats, cobwebs and other Gothic horror-type stuff abound, and the whole thing looks like an old burial crypt. Cheap thrills can be milked from this (a black cat jumps out at the wrong time, for example) if desired.

In a careful search, a trap door can be found in the kitchen floor. This swings upward on a pair of rusty hinges. Opening the door will alert the inhabitants of this building that they have visitors. If the adventurers haven't figured it out yet, this building is the nesting ground for a vampire clan.

The party will then be attacked by 1d6 of the Lesser Cybervamps. (See the *Cast* section of this adventure for the stats.) These Lesser Cybervamps are trying to drive the explorers off, not necessarily kill them (but if somebody should get unlucky, that's a bonus). If the setup requires more Lesser Cybervamps to do the job - use them!

The party will notice - as they run for their lives - that the Cybervamps are all strikingly beautiful females. They are all very pale and have dark hair, almost black in color.

Once the explorers are back in daylight, the Cybervamps will break off the attack. The conclusion should be obvious: the all-girl gang Carmirita is, in reality, a group of vampires. Let the adventurers try to figure out how to deal with them as they may, but the Carmirita will remain holed away by day and elusive by night. (If the bar is staked out, then every so often at night a beautiful woman in a pale-blue evening gown can be seen floating on the wind high overhead. She is heading toward the ocean. In the morning, another grisly corpse of a foolish surfer will be found washed up on shore, the twin holes in the neck and carved symbol of a bat easily found.)

Eventually, a visit to the Golden Bear during business hours will be in order.

Huntington At Night

This small beach community takes on a different personality in the evening hours. The once-busy streets are now vacant, and most residents have locked themselves in their homes. All doors are bolted shut and locked, and only the shadows and the denizens of the night remain. The investigators should be encouraged to enlist the aid of the Surf Nazis to protect them while in the area during the evening hours. Otherwise, make their travels much tougher.
When the party eventually enters the Golden Bear, dim red light will be visible from all the windows, and the front door will be wide open. A beautiful woman will ask for identification. She is wearing a red evening

gown and will have a glint of mystery in her eyes. She will smile at the group, though they should have no idea why. After checking IDs, she will let them in. No one will try to restrict the party in any way, though they do draw more than their share of not-so-casual glances. Almost everyone in the joint is similar to the woman at the door - very attractive, very well dressed, very pale and very female.

The Trap Is Sprung

After an initial hesitant reception, the PCs will be approached by more and more of the women, offering to purchase the men (or even women) drinks, play pool or otherwise party with them. One by one, they will try to lure the players into the bedrooms upstairs. If they fall prey to the bait, they will be killed. Smart players will realize what is happening and try to fight them as a team. If anyone brought along typical vampire-hunting weapons, they will have no effect at all. If they check to see if the women have a reflection in a mirror, the women indeed do. A running gun battle (or some other dramatic escape) out of the Golden Bear is in order.

Out of the Fire

Upon escaping from the Golden Bear, the players may have learned who the enemy is and even what the enemy *isn't*. The women have fangs and several nasty habits, but they are not supernatural creatures, and especially not vampires. (They are cyberenhanced humans with implanted fangs, but there's little way for the players to figure that out until the adventure is over. The floating woman at night will turn out to be a holographic decoy. The real cybervamps use an underground passage to leave and enter the Golden Bear on their forays.)

Any attack should be made during daylight hours, hopefully with the Surf Nazis' help. Under the trap door in the kitchen floor the players will find the lair of the cybervamps. Once again, when the door is disturbed the guarding Lesser Cybervamps will attack.

Into the Frying Pan

Inside the cellar are 26 coffins. Each one contains a sleeping cybervamp. If the party tries to kill them one at a time, they will awaken and fight back -Êand these are Master Cybervamps, not the Lesser Cybervamps found in the kitchen. A better choice may be explosives or fire. The club building is old and would burn very easily. If some of the "vamps" get away, the work is not yet done - not being true vampires, they have no vulnerability to sunlight. They are just as mean in the daylight.

Destroying the "vampires" ends the adventure. Possible rewards for the party are the Surf Nazis as contacts/allies, and any cyber equipment that survives the finale.

The Cast

Master Cybervamps:

ST 14
DX 12
IQ 12
HT 16

Speed 7
Move 7
Dodge 7

Skills: Brawling-13, Stealth-13, Shadowing-12, Sex Appeal-10, Voice-12, Acting-14, Streetwise-12, Fast-Talk-10, Judo-12.

Advantages: Voice, Empathy, Night Vision, Peripheral Vision, Rapid Healing, Acute Vision+3, Acute Hearing+3, Combat Reflexes, High Pain Threshold.

Disadvantages: Addiction (Human Blood), Bloodlust, Sadism, Major Delusion (Believe they are real vampires)

Cybernetic Enhancements: Flesh pocket, silver tongue, Cyberarms (PD 4, DR 8) with claws (2d+3 cutting, 1d+3 impaling).

The most powerful cybervamps, they have the most enhancements to their bodies and many of them believe that they really are vampires in need of human blood.

Lesser Cybervamps:

ST 10
DX 8
IQ 6
HT 8

Speed 4
Move 4
Dodge 4

Skills: Brawling-11, Stealth-10, Sex Appeal-10, Streetwise-12, Fast-Talk-10, Judo-12.

Advantages: Night Vision, Peripheral Vision, Rapid Healing, Acute Vision+1, Acute Hearing+1, High Pain Threshold.

Disadvantages: Addiction (Human Blood), Bloodlust, Sadism, Major Delusion (Believes they are real vampires)

Cybernetic Enhancements: Cyberarms (PD 2, DR 6) with claws (2d+3 cutting, 1d+3 impaling).

A less-enhanced version of the Master Cybervamps, but still a foe to be reckoned with. They were at one time area residents, but are now servants of the Master Cybervamps.

The Surf Nazis

ST 11
DX 10
IQ 8
HT 10

Speed 5
Move 5
Dodge 5

Skills: Brawling-12, Area Knowledge (Huntington Beach)-12, Stealth-13, Streetwise-12, Knife-12, Drive (Truck)-11, Fast Draw (Pistol)-12, Running-10, Gun (Machine Pistol)-12 Throwing-12, Carousing-10 Swimming-12, Shortsword-10, Sports (Surfing)-14.

Advantages: Luck, Strong Will+1, Combat Reflexes, High Pain Threshold, Danger Sense.

Disadvantages: Social Stigma, Alcoholism, Bully.

Cybernetic Enhancements: All wear medium monocrys body armor with PD 2, DR 16. Cyber eyes, +2 vision bonus, cyberlegs that increase Move and Dodge by +3.

Many would have suspected them to be the killers, but if treated correctly they are the only people strong enough to deal with the cybervamps on equal terms. They have the firepower and - most importantly - the contacts with other surf punk gangs. If need be, they could contact the other surf gangs and rally them against the cybervamps.

A few pointers for the GM: these surf gangs, the Nazis in particular, live by a code of violence. They will shoot first, then ask questions later. This rule especially is true for "outsiders" who come from other areas into their "turf." They also may show little patience for good tactics, such as surveillance or less than bullheaded assaults on the Golden Bear. They're as likely as not to foul up any plans dependent on guile.

Once the immediate threat of the cybervamps is dealt with, the relationship between the investigators and Surf Nazis may be subject to radical change . . .

Ayo Gurkali!

Gurkhas in Roleplaying

by Robert M. Brown

Art by Ray Lunceford

For 180 years Gurkha mercenaries have been serving in the British Army, and science fiction has carried the tradition into the far future. Their influence may extend even further; the battle cry of Tolkien's Dwarves is *Khazad ai menu* (The Dwarves are upon you). The similarity to *Ayo Gurkhali* (The Gurkhas are upon you) may be coincidental, but Tolkien was writing at a time when the Gurkhas were winning fame in southeast Asia and north Africa.

While technically mercenaries, the Nepalese peasants who enlist in the British (and, more recently, Indian) Army are not primarily motivated by money. The average Gurkha leaves his poverty stricken hills as a sort of rite of passage, to prove his courage, and to see the world. In other words, they are adventurers.

Background

Nepal is a poor country sandwiched between India and Tibet. Mount Everest is in Nepal, which says all there is to say about the landscape. Nepal's contact with the modern world began with a war with British India in 1814. The British were so impressed by the fighting qualities of their Gurkha opponents that they could hardly wait to begin enlisting them.

For the next 40 years the Gurkha regiments helped guard India's frontiers, until the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857. Almost alone among Britain's Native Infantry, the Gurkhas stayed loyal and by the end of the fighting were permitted to wear British uniforms and were known as "riflemen," not "sepoys." After another 40 years of guarding the frontiers, WWI came and sent the Gurkha regiments to such faraway places as France, Gallipoli, and the middle east. Gurkhas served with Lawrence of Arabia.

Possibly the best of the sentry stories that every Gurkha war spawns comes from WWI. A British warship on the Suez canal was halted by a Gurkha sentry who aimed his rifle at the bridge and would not let it pass until his officer told him it was okay. Gurkhas take orders very literally.

In WWII the Gurkhas, now widely recognized as an elite group, served in north Africa, Italy, Burma, and southeast Asia. When India gained its independence, the Gurkha regiments were divided between India and Britain. They were one of the few groups which tried impartially to maintain order in the chaotic partition of India. Since then, the British Gurkha regiments have fought in Korea, Malaysia, Borneo, and the Falkland Islands.

Characters

Gurkha names are formed by adding a given name to the individual's tribal name. With only four tribes contributing soldiers, there are a lot more Gurkhas than names. The British Army got around this by adding a number to the beginning of each soldier's name, and men were often known by that number rather than their proper name.

To make up authentic sounding Gurkha names, a quick look at the tribes of Nepal would be helpful. For our purposes, the four most important tribes are the Magars, Gurungs, Limbus and Rais. The occasional Sunwar, Thamang or Newar also enlists in the Gurkha regiments. Magars make up a third of Nepal's

population and use their clan rather than tribal name to form their personal name. The Thapa, Pun, Ale and Rana clans are the largest. Common first names include Lalbahadur, Manbahadur, Jitbahadur, Chandra and Narbahadur (Bahadur is Nepalese for 'brave' and is a frequent component of male names).

Advantages, Disadvantages & Skills

Gurkhas accepted for military service were the healthiest of those who grew up in a very harsh environment, and would have a minimum HT and ST of 10. Most Physical Disadvantages would be inappropriate, with the possible exception of Youth in pre-20th century campaigns (boys as young as 14 were occasionally enlisted). Even in the strict British Army of the 19th century, floggings and court martials were almost unknown in the Gurkha regiments; Honesty and Truthfulness would be appropriate Disadvantages. Kleptomania would not. Gurkhas were uniformly unfazed by both the horrors of battle and the wonders of the world outside Nepal. Unfazeable and Fearless suit the Gurkha well.

Gurkhas are small (averaging 5'2" in the 19th century, 5'3" in more modern times) but their hardiness is legendary:

During an earthquake in 1905 a soldier jumped from an upper story window as the building collapsed. He then went for help and returned with a work party to dig survivors from the rubble. After working all day he asked to go to the hospital; his pelvis had been broken when he leaped from the building that morning.

A Gurkha sergeant was once kicked in the head by an iron-shod mule. He later complained of a headache. The mule went lame.

In 1890 a Lt. Swinton was killed when he was struck by a bullet that had ricocheted from his orderly's head. Orderly Gorey Thapa was slightly injured.

Toughness, High Pain Threshold, and Rapid Healing, would all be appropriate Advantages for Gurkha characters.

Normally very cheerful, the Gurkha is also famous for his Bad Temper, though it sometimes shows itself in odd ways. In 1945, Lachhiman Gurung was injured when a Japanese grenade went off in his hand, disabling his trenchmates. Lachhiman fought off the Japanese with his left hand for another four hours before help came and daylight revealed 31 Japanese dead in front of his position. After recovering from his wounds and being told he was to receive the Victoria Cross his response was, "I not brave, but I saw all my friends wounded, and then I looked at my hand and I was very, very angry."

Each Nepalese tribe has its own language; Nepalese (or Gurkhali) is a *lingua franca*, and relatively easy to learn. Consider it a M/E skill.

The trademark knife or shortsword of the Nepalese is the *kukri*, with its distinctive downward curving blade. It may be treated as a Shortsword, but with -1 on damage to thrusting attacks, and +1 on swinging attacks. Individuals with Shortsword skill but unfamiliar with the *kukri* should be at a -1 or -2 to skill until they've had a few minutes to get

used to the odd balance. All Gurkha soldiers will have some skill with the *kukri.*.

Campaign Use

Gurkhas encountered outside Nepal would typically be soldiers on active duty, and would make formidable NPCs (or PCs in a military campaign). After leaving service most Gurkhas return to Nepal, but not all, and many of those who make the journey to enlist but are rejected are too embarrassed to return to their villages. Civilian Gurkha adventurers would be unusual, but not terribly so, any time in the 19th and 20th centuries.

In a fantasy world, Gurkhas would fit perfectly on the fringes of civilization. Indeed, as the only soldiers who still carry swords into battle (and use them!) it could be argued that they fit better in a fantasy world than they do in the real world.

Anyone looking for more information on these fascinating people than can fit into a short article could do far worse than to refer to Byron Farwell's fine book *The Gurkhas.*

An *In Nomine* Resource by Alain H. Dawson

Karaziel walked out the door of the clinic toward the despondent form hunched on the stoop. She had been sitting there ever since the boy she came to see had snarled at her to stay out of his life. The angel stopped next to her and lit himself a cigarette, hoping that would get her attention.

As the smoke blew by her, she lifted her head like a stray dog catching scent of a T-bone.

"Hey, lemme have one, will ya?" she said, half begging, half demanding.

"Sure." He threw the pack to her. "Keep it, I ought to quit anyway."

They smoked in silence, then suddenly she stared at him and said, "How do you know if a person is good for you?"

"What do you mean?"

"Like, I've gone out with a lot of guys that treated me bad, and now I'm dating this guy who's actually nice, but I keep wanting to fool around on him. How do I know if he's good for me?"

"Why don't you ask your parents?"

She rolled her eyes eloquently.

"Don't you have a good relationship with them?"

Her thin face took on a look of distrust. "I don't want to talk about it."

"How old are you?"

"Fifteen."

"And you've dated a lot of guys?"

She smirked. "Yeah, a lot."

"How did they treat you badly? Did they hit you?"

Again, she looked suspicious of him. "I don't want to talk about it."

"You sound like you need to talk to someone. I can put you in touch with a group that might be able to answer your question for you, help you put your problems in perspective . . ."

"I don't have a problem, mister. God, ask a stupid question . . ." She unfolded herself from her perch and threw the pack of cigarettes at him. "Keep the damn things."

Karaziel watched her stalk away and winced as he thought about the pain she was heading toward in her future, the pain he had to share.

He looked up and asked with both puzzlement and despair, "Why me?"

Being a member of the Host is not all harps and clouds. Angels may live in the grace of God, but some of them have to put up with torments that would make any demon flinch. On very bad days some angels wonder whether Kronos has more to do with their lives than Yves. Other angels sympathize with their plight, usually from a safe distance. After all, bad luck is contagious.

Karaziel

The Angel of Self-Destruction
Cherub Vassal of Flowers

Corporeal Forces - 4 Strength 10 Agility 6
Ethereal Forces - 4 Intelligence 10 Precision 6
Celestial Forces - 3 Will 3 Perception 9

Vessel: Human/3 (Charisma+1).

Role: Clinic Administrator/2 (Status 2).

Skills: Detect Lies/4, Drive/3, Medicine/6, Small Weapon (Baton)/4, Tracking/5.

Songs: Harmony (Corporeal/4, Ethereal/5), Motion (Corporeal/6), Shields (Corporeal/5, Celestial/3).

Attunements: Cherub of Flowers, Mercurian of Fire, Vassal of Flowers, the Angel of Self-Destruction.

Special Rites: Gains 1 Essence each time he prevents someone from hurting himself.

Dissonance: 2.

Karaziel is very unusual for a Word-bound celestial. He didn't petition for his Word or undergo any tests: apparently, it was given to him as a lesson.

He is a young angel, only a century old, and he made a mistake. He was attuned to a woman whose husband abused and threatened her. This being his first time on Earth, he was naive about human behavior and tended to believe human propaganda. In his Role as a minister he counseled her to stay at her parents' home while her husband "cooled off" from their recent argument, then go back to him. Karaziel saw no danger in his advice and only realized his carelessness when the shrieking dissonance of her death overcame him. Her husband had killed her.

Novalis recalled him and he cowered under her wrath, unable to say anything in self-defense. When she finally left him alone, he heard a voice asking how he wished to atone. He answered miserably that he wanted to stop the same thing from happening again. Much to his amazement, he was immediately given his Word and charged to help those who would hurt themselves.

Karaziel had no idea what he was getting into. Supporting his Word is a long process of imbuing self-worth into his charges until they no longer seek out ways to damage themselves. He can't force them to stand up for themselves. It may take years until he motivates someone to kick a drug habit or leave a batterer, and all the while he is attuned and suffers along with them. He carries a constant burden of dissonance because he can't always protect his charges from their own actions. For this reason most angels find him unpleasant to be around, so he has few friends among his peers, even those who appreciate his work.

His Word does not allow him to waste much attention on the abusers his victims chose, but he frequently tips off Gabriel's forces and watches with satisfaction as they punish the victimizers. He has helped her Word to such an extent that she granted him the Mercurian of Fire attunement. Of course, this burdens him with even more responsibility.

Fortunately, Karaziel takes his responsibilities very seriously. He supports his Word not only on an individual basis, but by forming and financing shelters, clinics, hotlines, any sort of group which might help him look after his charges. Actually, Karaziel doesn't have much money himself, but he does know how to raise it: he pesters the Servitors of Marc. The Archangel of Trade knows many affluent people (and corporations, and governments) who need tax shelters or positive publicity, and Karaziel always has a worthwhile organization lined up to receive the money. Despite having a Word that is far too big for him, Karaziel has not been overcome, but has risen to the challenge.

The Angel of Self-Destruction attunement grants him the ability to successfully perform all 3 Songs of Healing, at the normal cost. Combined with his Cherub of Flowers attunement, this enables him to make people feel much better when he is around. He has often sought out Roles that allow him to mask his healing as a part of his job. At various times he has been a priest, a doctor and a therapist. Currently he has assumed the Role of an administrator at a detox clinic.

Valerian

The Angel of Politeness
Elohite Master of Trade

Corporeal Forces - 4 Strength 6 Agility 10
Ethereal Forces - 5 Intelligence 9 Precision 11
Celestial Forces - 5 Will 8 Perception 12

Vessel: Human/4 (Charisma +3).

Skills: Artistry/5, Detect Lies/6, Driving/3, Emote/6, Fast-Talk/6, Singing/5.

Songs: Charm (All/6), Harmony (All/6), Tongues (Corporeal/6, Ethereal/4).

Attunements: Elohite of Trade, Elohite of Destiny, Mercurian of War, Master of Trade, Divine Contract, Incarnate Law, the Angel of Politeness.

Artifacts: A white silk handkerchief that acts as a Reliquary/3.

Special Rites: as Angel of Politeness, Valerian receives 1 Essence when he takes part in a polite conversation (all parties in the conversation must be acting politely).

Valerian is a Word-bound angel in trouble. His once powerful Word has gone into a severe decline since its peak around the beginning of this century. All the advances that he has worked on for millennia are slipping away, and his attempts to halt this erosion have blown up in his face.

While serving his Word he has fought diligently against rudeness such as pranks, dirty jokes and toilet humor. This has thrown him into direct conflict with Kobal. The Demon Prince of Dark Humor has oodles of fun poking holes in Valerian's sometimes stuffy attempts to defend the status quo. His decline can be almost singly attributed to the work of Kobal and his servants, who never tire of turning politeness into a symbol of repression, class warfare and narrow-mindedness. In a desperate attempt to gain lost ground, Valerian fostered the idea of Political Correctness during the '80s. Within months, Kobal had turned it from a rejection of hurtful labels to a nationwide cult of language fascism. He hasn't stopped laughing over that one yet.

Valerian appears as the epitome of politeness in any society. In England, he is a well-groomed older gentleman with an umbrella and a pin-striped suit. In Japan he is a wizened matriarch in a snow-white kimono. His aged appearance

reflects his opinion of himself as obsolete. He is bewildered by modern society and finds New York City downright scary. Despite the current weakness of his Word, Valerian is still an old and powerful angel, and underestimating him can bring reprisals of astonishing strength and subtlety.

His attunement allows him always to succeed at the skill Savoir-Faire. More importantly, it gives him the Mercurian resonance for human interaction. No matter how worried he may be about supporting his Word, his concern is never outwardly apparent. He is far too skilled in social situations to project any feeling he wishes to conceal. Valerian's control is not always to his benefit, however. He cannot physically defend his word, and because he is at all times polite, his Word gets ignored in favor of more urgent business and more urgent angels.

Koriel

The Angel of Equal Truth
Seraph Inquisitor and Master of Judgment

Corporeal Forces - 3 Strength 4 Agility 8
Ethereal Forces - 5 Intelligence 11 Precision 9
Celestial Forces - 6 Will 12 Perception 12

Vessel: Human/3.

Role: Lawyer/6 (Status 4).

Skills: Computer Operation/4, Driving/2, Emote/6, Fast-Talk/6

Songs: Form (Ethereal/4, Celestial/6), Harmony (Ethereal/5, Celestial/6), Tongues (Corporeal/6, Ethereal/3, Celestial/4).

Attunements: Seraph of Judgment, Master of Judgment, Advocate, Incarnate Law, Angel of Equal Truth.

Artifacts: A small set of scales (yes, just like the ones Blind Justice carries). When Koriel spends 1 Essence, she can force a biased person to make an Intelligence roll. If Koriel succeeds, the biased person loses his bias for a number of minutes equal to the check digit.

Special Rites: In addition to all of Dominic's Rites, Koriel receives 1 point of Essence for helping the legal defense of a human, 2 points for defending a celestial.

Koriel decided long ago that among humans, truth is not absolute, it is relative. The underdogs of the world had to fight harder to get their truths heard and believed. This went against her very nature as a Seraph, so she committed herself to the concept of equal truth, equal justice for all. She fostered the concept of the public defender, a voice to speak for those most in need whether they were guilty or not. In time, she earned the Word of Equal Truth.

Over the years, this Word expanded to encompass more than she had anticipated. Many of the people she spoke for were far from innocent, but her desire to see all beings get a fair hearing overcame her angelic distaste. More than other angels, she was able to hate the sin while striving to help the sinner. When it became known that she would represent even the most unpopular defendants, Outcasts began to seek her out, asking her to intervene for them with their Superiors. Eventually, even Renegades sought her advice on how to atone and return to a state of grace.

Dominic watches such interactions very carefully, but it is a measure of his respect for her that he allows them at all. When she successfully managed to reinstate a fallen angel (over the course of a century), Dominic nicknamed her "The Devil's Advocate." The name has bad connotations for Koriel's angelic peers, particularly those who support the Word of Judgment. The more time she spends in questionable company, the less other angels want to be around her. As her friends have grown more distant, she has been forced to choose between loneliness or the often unpleasant company of those she defends. Currently, she favors loneliness.

Humanity itself seems dead-set against her Word, no matter how much lip service they devote to it. Over the millenia, she has seen the underdogs of countless societies shake off their oppressors in the name of equality only to become oppressors themselves. If she ever slept, she might find it difficult to get up in the morning.

Koriel does have allies; the most powerful is Michael. He knows all too well how it feels to be persecuted, and he thinks she provides a good balance to Dominic. He does, however, believes in a more physical defense of the truth, and he often chides her for talking when he thinks the time for words is past.

Koriel's drive to succeed makes her seem distant and cold-hearted, but she cares deeply about the people she helps. Caring to her means fighting to redress a wrong, not coddling. She keeps herself and other Servitors of Judgment honed in constant debate, which they usually tire of long before she does. In keeping with her nickname, she usually takes the most unpopular side in any discussion, and some angels even accuse her of disagreeing with them just to provoke an argument. Relaxing, she is not.

Her major enemy is time. Like most public defenders, she has far too many cases that need her attention and her backlog is huge. The hardest thought for her to bear is that she can never catch up. No matter how hard she tries, thousands of injustices occur every day. Yves, out of respect for the harassed Seraph, has lent her the services of a clerk. Koriel has the use of an Ofanite who knows Yves' Library up and down, and always finds the fastest way to pass on anything important he discovers. Unfortunately, this only scratches the surface of Koriel's workload.

Koriel's Equal Truth attunement is for memory: she can remember any fact or detail relating to any being she has ever defended. This makes her incredibly irritating to argue with, because she can marshal the facts with consummate ease. All in all, she is neither comfortable with herself nor with other beings. She is only happy with the Truth, and the Truth is in short supply.

An *In Nomine* Resource by Alain H. Dawson

Two demons sat on a park bench. They had finished throwing their empty beer bottles at the ducks an hour ago and were now engrossed in dissecting the many flaws of the Impudite's Demon Prince.

"C'mon, man, why do you put up with all the crap Asmodeus hands you? Did you tell God to kiss your butt so you could end up taking orders from a second-rate Djinn? I know you hear me knocking, and I think I'm making sense."

The Impudite snarled as his companion's words sank home. "You're right. He's jealous of me, I can tell. I'll never advance as long as he has anything to say about it. He probably tells Lucifer that I'm a goody-two-shoes behind my back. I'd like to tell him where to shove this assignment."

The Balseraph smiled. "You should say that to his face, man. Just to see him choke on his barbed tongue. Wouldn't that be great?"

A sudden reckless courage took hold of the Impudite. "I'll do it!" he screamed, leaping to his feet. "I'm going to invoke him right here! And he'd better . . . "

A shriek cut him off mid-sentence and the Impudite spun around. A huge, flaming hand had appeared out of nowhere and held the Balseraph in its crushing grasp. A cold voice cracked through the air like a whip.

"Not funny, Uzal."

The hand vanished, taking the Balseraph with it. A robed figure sat on the bench in its wake. The Impudite's stomach sank as he recognized the new arrival.

Asmodeus gazed at his quivering servant and said softly, "It must be hell to be the Demon of Insubordination, don't you think?"

The act of supporting certain Words can get a demon in heaps of trouble. The more diligently he works, the more heat he takes. The following demons have words that most diabolicals wouldn't wish on a dog. These NPCs can liven up an adventure, but demonic characters had better keep their distance if they know what's good for them.

Uzal

Demon of Insubordination

Corporeal Forces - 6 Strength 12 Agility 12
Ethereal Forces - 5 4Intelligence 11 Precision 9
Celestial Forces - 6 Will 12 Perception 12
Vessel: Human/3 (Charisma +3)

Skills: Emote/6, Fast-Talk/6, Dodge/3, Computer Operation/3, Drive/4

Songs: Charm (Ethereal/6, Celestial/6), Form (Corporeal/4, Celestial/6), Possession/5, Tongues (Corporeal/6, Ethereal/4)

Attunements: *All* Balseraph attunements, Demon of Insubordination

Rites: Uzal generates 1 Essence every time he convinces someone to commit an act of insubordination.

Uzal is a Balseraph with a very special place in Hell. He serves no Demon Prince and has no Superior except for Lucifer himself. The reason is obvious; he simply won't follow orders. Not only that, he causes all those around him to develop the same attitude. The Princes think he's poison, and if they catch any of their minions fraternizing with him, those minions will have a lot of explaining to do.

Working directly for the Lord of Hell is no walk in the park, as Uzal will tell you at great length. Lucifer doesn't give him orders as such, because it is against Uzal's nature to follow anyone's orders. The Lightbringer just whacks the upstart whenever he gets out of hand, or sometimes simply at random. The thought of getting "whacked" by Lucifer can give the boldest demon cold sweats, so Uzal's Word is in no danger of being contested.

He is the only demon for whom a 666 roll is bad news: Lucifer has noticed his work and disapproves. (A roll of 111 remains disastrous for him. Essentially, any Intervention is bad for Uzal.) On a roll of 666, Uzal will be snatched back to Hell and remain indisposed for 6 days. No diabolical dares to ask what happens to him, but whatever it is, the effects don't last long. He is rarely out of commission for more than a few weeks, although any time he gets in trouble he loses all of his talismans and artifacts and must start collecting them all over again.

Uzal will foster his Word anywhere there is a hierarchy to be undermined. Armed forces, factories, palaces, corporations: if there are underlings, he's there to stir them up. He makes junior executives ruin their bosses' careers and soldiers frag their lieutenants. Uzal isn't interested in getting large groups to rebel. He works on an individual basis, getting one person to trample the authority of another. Much to his disgust, his actions occasionally bring about a change for the good, but even under those circumstances he can't stop himself.

In addition to possessing all of the Balseraph attunements, Uzal's word grants him the ability to fill a victim with false courage. Many people harbor the desire to take revenge on those in power but are deterred by the possible consequences. At a cost of 1 Essence, Uzal can suppress a person's fear of repercussion for a number of minutes equal to his Ethereal Forces, or as long as he is within eyesight of his victim. Celestials are allowed an Intelligence roll to avoid being taken in by his exhortations. Anyone who stays within 10 feet of him for an hour or more is infected with false courage at no cost to Uzal. The duration is the same as above.

It has been whispered that Uzal might actually be a part of Lucifer. After all, the Lightbringer's rebellion against God is the greatest act of insubordination ever committed. Add to that the extraordinary autonomy Uzal enjoys and the rumors abound.

Kronos is the only Prince who seems to have any solid information about a possible connection, and he isn't talking.

In fact, talking about Uzal is considered bad luck in Hell, where everyone's Superior is paranoid. As the saying goes, "Speak of the devil and he shall appear."

Hephzibah

Demon of Taking Credit for Someone Else's Work
Shedite Servitor of Theft

Corporeal Forces - 2 Strength 2 Agility 6
Ethereal Forces - 4 Intelligence 11 Precision 5
Celestial Forces - 3 Will 2 Perception 10
Skills: Fast-Talk/6, Lying/6

Songs: Shields (Corporeal/5, Ethereal/5, Celestial/3), Tongues (Corporeal/6, Ethereal/2)

Attunements: Shedite of Theft, Passage, Swipe, Demon of Taking Credit for Someone Else's Work

Rites: Hephzibah generates 1 point of Essence each time she convinces someone that she was responsible for something she didn't do.

For a Word-bound demon, Hephzibah is pretty weak. This is because she doesn't actually do most of what she claims. Many of Hell's denizens feel that this is perfectly acceptable behavior if no one finds out the truth, but because of her Word, she is usually found out, and on the rare occasions when she does accomplish something noteworthy, she is hard-pressed to make anyone believe her.

Once a low-level demon with ambition but no determination, she more than made up for her lack of work ethic in chutzpah.

Despite having achieved no distinctions, she decided to apply for a Word - Demon of Crashes. She told everyone that she caused an airplane crash over Norway that took 138 lives and a 47-car pile-up near LAX the day before Thanksgiving, knowing that the two demons actually responsible were still in Trauma and couldn't contradict her. Lucifer, the master of simultaneous punishment and reward, did give her a Word, but he named her Demon of Taking Credit for Someone Else's Work, thus making it apparent to the Hosts of Hell that she was a traitorous liar. Flattering, yes, but he exposed her method of advancement so that she would have to work very hard to pull off the same trick again.

She does very little to support her Word among humans. Luckily, her Word is really self-supporting. What strength she has comes from humanity's great desire to look out for No. 1. Her real troubles come when she has to work with other demons. Understandably, they don't trust her farther than they can throw her into a gale-force wind. She is a back-stabbing little sneak who uses all of her skills and abilities to cover herself with stolen glory. Because of this, she must continually shift hosts to avoid recognition by other diabolicals while she is on earth.

Valefor really admires Hephzibah's brand of theft, but he gets frustrated with her because she never admits that she's stealing. He thinks she should have more pride in her work and so he still hasn't given her any distinctions. However, her Word grants her the Balseraph resonance for lying (see *In Nomine*, p. 142). If she uses her attunement to make herself more important, it's free. For any other purpose, it costs her 1 Essence per person she wishes to deceive.

Lagopus

Demon of Bad Tidings
Impudite Knight of Factions

Corporeal Forces - 3 Strength 2 Agility 10
Ethereal Forces - 4 Intelligence 6 Precision 10
Celestial Forces - 4 Will 4 Perception 12
Vessel: Human/2

Role: Mailman

Skills: Computer Operation/3, Dodge/6, Drive/4, Escape/6, Move Silently/5, Running/6

Songs: Healing (Ethereal/4, Celestial/5), Shields (Corporeal/3, Ethereal/3, Celestial/6)

Artifacts: Stealthy Shoes/3

Attunements: Impudite of Factions, Imbroglio, Knight of Deception, Demon of Bad Tidings

Rites: Lagopus gains 1 Essence every time he delivers bad tidings and personally witnesses the receiver's reaction (anger, sorrow, etc.) and 1 Essence when he gets bad news distributed nationwide in newspapers or on TV.

Everyone wants to kill the messenger, as Lagopus can attest. He is a pariah in Hell even amongst the Princes, because Lucifer often uses him to pass on reprimands, dirty jobs or busywork. He is frequently the worse for wear after telling a Prince something he didn't want to hear, and has refined his defensive abilities extensively as a result. He is a master of the quick getaway.

Lesser demons run from Lagopus like a process server. He has no friends because there is so much bad news in Hell that he is never off duty.

His only joy in life is traveling the Corporeal realm in his guise as a mailman. Delivering bad tidings to humans has no downside and nets him a lot of Essence. He has even been known to create an unfortunate accident just so he can go tell someone about it. He likes hanging out with paparazzi and hack journalists because they actually like to hear bad news and they tend to pass it on, furthering his Word. Unfortunately for him, he is not allowed to stay on earth indefinitely because he has too much to do in Hell and no one is willing to do his job for him.

His Demon of Bad Tidings attunement allows him to know one hurtful piece of information about a person at a cost of 2 Essence. He must make eye contact with his victim for his attunement to function. The information is always something the person did not already know, so Lagopus gets to share it with him. This attunement only works on the same person once per week, and Lagopus can always decide not to deliver the information if he thinks it would be more hurtful coming from somebody else.

by Christopher Jones

The Hour of the Knife is a short adventure for use with the ***Whispering Vault*** roleplaying game. It is designed with new Stalkers in mind, and is suitable for a first Hunt. This adventure is intended for a group of four to six players (preferably with at least two who specialize in combat), and GMs should adjust the encounters for groups of different size or experience.

Passages in italics are intended to be read aloud to players.

Game Master's Overview

Some weeks ago, in the small town of Trinity, one of the Unbidden, a Stranger known as "the Cutter," took over the body of Benjamin Yates, the local doctor. Soon thereafter, townspeople began disappearing, singly at first, but later in large numbers. Their fears dampened by the Corruption, none realized anything was wrong until it was too late. Now only one mortal remains in Trinity, a young girl named Rachel, the Supplicant.

Most of the townspeople are dead, and have been placed back in their homes in some bizarre semblance of normal conditions. However, they are obviously dead, and bear the signs of their torture and the Cutter's twisted experiments. Some of the people, however, have been transformed into minions of the Cutter. Their minds have been destroyed, their bodies twisted and they have had one hand replaced by a wicked knife blade. These "Slicers" serve both as guards and as scouts, attempting to find more victims for the Cutter's experiments.

At present, the Cutter has exhausted his supply of mortals, but it is simply a matter of time before the Slicers expand their range to the next town over. Meanwhile the Enigma puts a great strain on the Dream. Already Trinity is on the verge of splitting off into its own Shadowland.

The Call

Choose a Stalker, preferably the most caring of the group (but any will do), to receive the Call.

You are in the security of your domain when you start to hear it. At first you can't make out but soon it hits you. Sobbing. A child's crying begins to fill your head. Plaintive, lonely, afraid, it calls to you. Deep in the core of your being you are moved. Someone is in need.

The Navigator

At some point the players will call the Navigator, who will arrive almost immediately after the ritual is completed. This is odd, as Stalkers must usually wait for at least a few minutes. Players should take this as a sign that the situation is desperate and time is running out for the Supplicant.

No sooner do you complete the ritual of Calling than the sky begins to darken. Lightning begins to flash continuously and a strong wind springs up from nowhere. A few yards away the air begins to shimmer. Lightning continues to flash

and a great wave of thunder rolls across the land as the shimmering explodes. It is replaced by a great round mouth, a gaping maw 30 yards across. The mouth's owner is a vast worm-like creature that stretches off into the distance, seemingly forever. The Navigator has arrived.

The Path

You step into the mouth of the Navigator, which closes when everyone has entered. The ensuing darkness is suddenly shattered. Before you lies a beautiful country vista. A great field of green grass stretches below a clear blue sky. A well kept dirt road rolls on ahead, as far as the eye can see.

The road is the Winding Path, and the green fields, inviting though they may look, are the void of Netherspace (the Rift). Any Stalker who begins to leave the road will feel a great sense of dread, associated with the fields. You should point out in no uncertain terms that leaving the path would be very bad. Anyone leaving the path and entering the fields is lost in the Rift, and may only be saved by the Primal Powers.

The Barrier

You have been walking for some time when you come upon a clearing of sorts. The road widens greatly, but is completely blocked by the trunk of a great tree.

The tree is huge, full and healthy, green and strong, and it completely fills the road. There is no way around it without leaving the path, which is not recommended (as detailed above). If anyone tries to climb the tree, it will grow and the branches will thicken and become more dense, so that it is impossible to get around. As the Circle ponders, or actually attempts, to get around the Barrier, it begins to change.

As you attempt to find a way around the tree, you sense a change overcome it. It seems to darken and twist, its leaves retreat back into the gnarled branches. Even the sky overhead blackens. The tree's trunk begins to twist horribly. After a moment you see that a face has formed.

"Who dares," it booms. "Who dares seek passage to the Flesh?"

The tree is the Guardian. It will not attack the Stalkers unless they attack it first, but it will not allow them to pass unless they can "stare it down," so to speak. At least one of the Stalkers must present his/her Keys of Office, and declare his/her station (a name also helps). This must be done in a clear, commanding voice, with the utmost confidence. Any trace of doubt will be sensed by the Guardian, who will then deny passage. Should they fail at first, the Stalkers may keep trying until they manage to convince the Guardian of their sincerity.

Should the Stalkers fail, and run out of patience, they may attempt to attack the Guardian. This is not a good idea. This particular Guardian is powerful, both physically, and in its proximity to the Rift. One push off the path could lose a Stalker forever. Should the Stalkers actually manage to damage it (GM's discretion as to what this would take) it will cease to oppose them and let them pass.

The Guardian would prefer not to fight the Stalkers, and will do so only as a last resort. When the players suitably impress him, or defeat him, he will return to his previous appearance and allow them to pass.

The Guardian shudders and begins reverting to its former, more wholesome appearance. Its trunk seems to twist apart, and a tunnel appears. The road passes through the tree, and continues out the other side.

Arrival

The Stalkers are now free to continue. They will follow the path for a little while longer before they begin to see shadowy buildings forming in the fields, which begin to fade into the dull gray of asphalt streets and concrete sidewalks. It is at this time that the Weavers spin substance over the Stalkers. Before long the town solidifies and the Winding Path merges with the main street and disappears.

The town is small, with no more than 30 or 40 buildings, most of which lie along this street, Main Street. A little searching will reveal the town's name to be Trinity. Almost immediately upon arriving in town, the Stalkers will hear growling and grunting as if two animals were fighting. Coming from the same area, they will also hear a child crying.

The Supplicant

Arriving at the sound, in a small park in the center of town, a strange sight greets you. Two unhuman creatures are locked in combat. The smaller of the creatures looks like a large, fanged mouth surrounded by many eyes, none of which match. It is supported only by two powerful arms, which are currently grasping the shoulders of the other figure, teeth seeking its throat. This creature is covered with cuts and looks weaker than its opponent.

The second figure looks to have once been human, but is now gaunt and twisted. Its right hand has been replaced by a large knife-blade, and its eyes are vacant. On the ground, with its throat ripped out, is a near twin of this creature.

There is a small child, a girl of about 6 or so, sitting at the base of a tree, holding it tightly and watching the combat, sobbing.

The first combatant is a Bazreth (Bogey Man), a usually harmless Shadow normally found near children (***Whispering Vault,*** p. 106). It was awakened when the Enigma manifested, and when the townspeople began to disappear it protected Rachel (the little girl) and helped her to hide. Rachel calls him "Gus" and trusts him completely.

The second fighter is a Slicer. These were once townspeople, but their minds have been destroyed by the Cutter's tortures and they have been twisted to serve his ends.

The young girl, Rachel, is the lone survivor in the town. Aided by Gus, who showed himself as Slicers came for her parents, she has successfully evaded them for many days. It was Gus who convinced her to "call for help." She didn't really know what she was doing, but sincerely needed help, thus the Call to the Stalkers. Should any of the Stalkers move toward the fighters, she will call out: "Don't hurt Gus!"

If questioned, Rachel, with Gus' help, will reveal that the Slicers, whom she calls the "knife-people," had been coming for the townspeople until there was no one left, about a week ago. She knows nothing about the Cutter, but they do know that the Slicers come from the northeast.

GUS

Fortitude 5
Vitality 8 (currently 3)
Initiative 14 (16 if defending Rachel)
Defend 14
Perceive 16
Resolve 13 (15 to support Rachel, 10 to resist)
Combat: 2 Claws (Attack 11, 2D damage each) if both hit automatically bites for an additional 6D
Special Abilities: -1 die cap vs. attacks using Frenzy or Rend, can leap 100 yards.

Notes: Gus is exceptionally clever for a shadow. He sensed the coming of the Cutter and his fear for Rachel (under whose bed he lived) Awakened him. He remained hidden until the Slicers came for her, but then revealed himself and helped her to hide from them. At first she was afraid of him, but now she loves him and trusts him completely. Gus, in turn, will do anything to protect Rachel.

SLICER

Fortitude 4
Vitality 10

Initiative 10
Defend 10
Perceive 13
Resolve 15
Combat: Blade (Attack 12, 3D damage)
Special Abilities: Slicers are not Shadows, and thus cannot be Bound, Banished, etc.

Notes: These statistics apply to all Slicers, of which about a dozen remain. Though once human, Slicers are now part of the Enigma and Stalkers may attack them without fear of the Forbiddance.

RACHEL

Fortitude 2
Vitality 3
Initiative 4
Defend 4
Perceive 11
Resolve 11
Attack 3
Strength 1
Notes: With the coming of the Enigma, and meeting Gus, Rachel has Awakened, and started on the path of the Sensitive. Living for weeks in the Corruption of the Enigma has heightened her senses, and she will see the Stalkers for what they are. At first she will be afraid, but will eventually realize they are there to help.

The Town

If the Stalkers search the town, they will find that physically, nothing appears out of the ordinary. However, there are no people on the streets. Occasional moving figures will be revealed as Slicers, which travel in pairs looking for victims (six more Slicers remain in town while the others are at the Cutter's house).

In past weeks, the Cutter began kidnapping people from town, and subjecting them to his tortures. Those first few became the Slicers, who then began to find his victims for him. The Cutter fancies himself something of an artist, so once he finished with a victim he had it replaced in its house, and all signs of struggle removed. Thus most of the houses contain the bodies of their inhabitants, killed in a variety of slow and terrible ways, propped up with metal frames and placed in a natural-seeming pose.

The Search

Just northeast of town is a wooded area that the Stalkers will need to go through to reach the house in which the Cutter resides. Here, the signs of the Corruption are more obvious.

Heading northeast you enter a wooded area. Here you can see physical signs of the Corruption at work. The trees here are beginning to darken and twist into grotesque shapes, the air seems stagnant and thick. None of the normal forest sounds can be heard and a shadow seems to have cast itself over the area making it seem dim and forbidding.

Allow each of the Stalkers to make Sensitivity Rolls (difficulty 10). If successful, they can sense that as they travel northeast, the Corruption grows stronger, as if they are approaching the source.

After they travel for about 15 minutes have them make Perception Rolls (difficulty 10). Those who succeed will hear a rustling ahead, as if some animal, or pack of animals, was heading their way. They will then see a group of huge rats running toward them. The rats average about 4 feet long, not including tails, have red eyes and huge fanged teeth. They attack without hesitation.

GIANT RATS (10)

Fortitude 3
Vitality 8
Initiative 13
Defend 10
Perceive 13
Resolve 10
Combat: Bite (attack 10, 2D damage)
Notes: These were once normal rats, but prolonged exposure to the Corruption has mutated them into killing machines. Aside from their great size and resilience, the rats are crazed and attack anything they encounter, fighting to the death.

The House

Eventually the trees begin to thin. Breaking the treeline you find yourselves in the backyard of a large, old house. You feel an uneasy chill just looking at the structure. Whoever lived here before, the Corruption inhabits the house now.

This was the house of Dr. Yates, now the residence of the Cutter. As the Stalkers stop to get their first look at the house, four Slicers will approach them and attack.

Most of the house appears unchanged from how Dr. Yates kept it. It is only the basement which has been turned to the Cutter's twisted desires. The original office and laboratory areas have been crudely expanded, and are filled with all manner of torture devices. There is a pile of corpses in one corner, and the Cutter is working on another at the table, inserting metal rods, so that it can be replaced in its house. There are two Slicers standing guard at the bottom of the stairs. As the Stalkers approach, the Cutter will order the Slicers to attack and will scream and shout about how his important work cannot be interrupted.

THE CUTTER

The Aesthetic who would become the Cutter long ago became fascinated with pain. He hid this obsession well but eventually it betrayed him, its influence became noticeable in the Dream. As the taint he was bringing to the Dream became more and more noticeable, he panicked and, in desperation, he abandoned his station and fled into the Flesh.

Upon the conquering of his bestial side, the Cutter resolved to find a place where he could explore his passion for pain. Looking for someplace out of the mainstream, he came to the small town of Trinity and possessed the body of Dr. Benjamin Yates.

While in Dr. Yates' body, the Cutter appears as a balding, middle-aged man of average height and build. He wears a green surgical suit, and a white apron, now stained deep red. He bears in his hand the doctor's scalpel, which has become the Focus of the Enigma, as a tool of healing turned twisted to pain-giving.

Fortitude 4/7
Vitality 7/21
Initiative 12/14

Defend 12/15
Perceive 15/16
Resolve 18/20
Attack 13/14
Strength 3/5
Combat: Vessel: Scalpel (attack 13, 3D damage); Avatar: Tentacle-Knives (4 attacks at 14, 5D damage each)
Special Abilities: Parasite

Notes: Cutter's avatar appears much like a large octopus with horned ridges above its eyes and a mouth filled with syringes for teeth. His tentacles are not flesh, but metal cables which end in sharp blades.

Aftermath

If the players succeed in defeating the Cutter, the town of Trinity will begin to slowly fade away. With no one remaining, and their disappearance a problem to explain, the Dream is pushing Trinity out. The process will take a few hours; with Cutter gone there is no major urgency.

During this period, Gus will lead Rachel away from town. They will find their way to the next town, where the little girl will be found and cared for.

After what she has gone through, Rachel will likely grow to be a strong Sensitive and work in her own way to fight the Unbidden. In later years she could prove to be an important contact for Stalkers.

Should the Stalkers fail to defeat the Cutter, Trinity will be ejected from the Dream and will become a Shadowland. Unless defeated and brought to justice shortly thereafter, the Cutter will find Rachel and Gus.

With no new source of subjects to experiment on, he will make their agony last a long time . . .

Rewards (base, suggestions), per Stalker
Karma: 5
Experience: GM's discretion

An Alternative GURPS Cyberworld
by Stephen Kenson

Broovy was getting nervous. As the evening wore on at the Club Blackboard, he was getting more and more tense. He really wanted a drink, eying with lust the trays that the waitrons carried, but he didn't dare fog things up now. Especially if something had gone wrong.

"Tchort," Hando muttered. He wasn't so concerned as Broovy was about keeping sharp and he tossed off the last of his second beer. "Where is she, paryeni? You said she'd be here." Broovy took another long look around the club, at the various spookies and club kids scattered around the tables and dance floor. Still no sign.

"She will be," he told Hando. She'd better be, he thought to himself. Katrina was usually on time, something must be wrong, his gut told him. Kat would've sent word if she wasn't able to make the meet, either through the net or . . . otherwise. Broovy fingered the pentagram medallion under his shirt and let the touch of the solid metal calm and center him a bit. He had a bad feeling about this. With a last glance around he slid off his barstool and tapped Hando on the shoulder.

"C'mon, omae, let's fade." Just as they made to leave, three figures clad in black entered the club. Two were wearing light, form-fitting black body armor with the stars-and-stripes patch on the shoulder; they had burners holstered casually at their sides, like it was the sort of thing everyone wore on a night out. Nerks. The guy with them was wearing a long black coat over a bulky turtleneck that looked to have some neokev padding across the chest and back. He was pale and his dark eyes darted around the club as he slowly turned his head like he was listening to a sound no one else could hear.

"Faex," Broovy muttered, almost to himself, "witch-smeller. They must have gotten Kat." He guided Hando toward the back of the club with a gentle touch on his elbow. Had to play it sub-zero cool not to alert the boys-in-black or their trained bloodhound. If they were going to get out of this, it was going to take more than the little magic that Broovy knew. It was gonna take a poxy miracle.

Cross-genre pollination is one of the strengths of the ***GURPS*** system, allowing players to combine features from different worldbooks and genres to create their own unique setting. Many gamers have been interested by the contrast between the dark, gritty future of cyberpunk and a world of magical fantasy. This article offers one means of blending the two together, set in ***GURPS Cyberworld.***

HISTORY

Magic is a new and mysterious force in the One-and-Twenty, a new player in a very old game of power and control that may tip the scales toward one side or the other. Magicians in the occult underground research new spells every day that will give them a better understanding of the power that's out there, while the ProGov and the korps spend millions in cred on research projects to put this new power under their thumb as well. It's a race to an unknown finish line. Here's how it all started.

First Hints

The first real hint that something strange was going on came in 2021, when a NERCC strike team conducted a routine rooting-out of an underground group

of occultists in Boston. The NERCC commander on-site filed a report that claimed that the leader of the cultists somehow deflected weapons-fire aimed at him, despite laser-targeting systems. Two of the officers also collapsed from violent and painful muscle spasms.

Although an attempt was made to pass the whole report off as exaggeration, an investigation revealed that the cult followers believed that their leader was a sorcerer capable of performing actual magic, and that he was in contact with others who were capable of the same feats. NERCC Director Adam Hammond authorized a small team to investigate the possible occult conspiracy, a branch that became known as "Division X" by NERCC officers.

Over the next ten months, investigations by Division X began to turn up very disturbing evidence, not only of cooperation between many underground occultist organizations, but of individuals who displayed abilities that could not be explained by cyber implants or other modern technology. As the evidence mounted, more resources were diverted to Division X to continue their research and to keep information about such paranormal phenomena from the general public.

By 2023, the NERCC and the United States government had incontrovertible evidence of more than a dozen individuals who exhibited what could only be described as supernatural powers. At this time Director Hammond made Division X a permanent branch of the NERCC with the directive to uncover and eliminate threats posed to the security of the nation by this "occult conspiracy." What stories of "paranormal powers" that leaked to the press were discredited and not widely believed by the general public.

Public Display

In 2025, the U.S. Government's carefully constructed "occult cover-up" exploded in its face . . . literally. The nationwide rioting and civil unrest that led to the formation of the Provisional Government was rumored to be aided by so-called "mages" displaying unusual abilities. Information on the existence of these strange powers began to spread, and a media blanket was thrown over the issue in an effort to smother the smoldering rumors.

In November of 2025, an assassination attempt was made at the swearing-in ceremony of Provisional President Martin Patterson. The assassin seemed to appear on the platform out of thin air and hurled a blast of flames from his hands at Patterson. Shots from NERCC officers failed to harm the assassin, and he was finally brought down by a squad of men. The assassin destroyed himself and a dozen other people in a fiery blast. President Patterson was rushed to the hospital, where he was pronounced dead two days later. The entire event was captured on national television and the public clamored for information as rumors about the identity and nature of the assassin multiplied.

The Big Lie

The Provisional Congress chose Adam Hammond, Director of the NERCC, to succeed Martin Patterson as Provisional President in 2025. In his first national address, Hammond revealed the existence of an occult conspiracy possessed of "paranormal abilities" that was responsible for the death of President Patterson, the same conspiracy responsible for the assassination of President Burris in 2010. He informed the public of the danger of these conspirators and swore that the resources of the NERCC would be devoted to eliminating "these and any other threats to the life, liberty and prosperity of our nation."

Official ProGov policy recognized the existence of a new form of "somatic mutation," supported by several experts at universities and think tanks. Citizens were strongly encouraged to report paranormal activity to the proper authorities. Although no official ProGov or media report ever made use of the word "magic," many people began referring to these unusual abilities as such and terms such as "mage," "witch" and "spell" began to see common use.

MAGIC IN THE ONE-AND-TWENTY

In 2043, most people accept that magic (of some kind or another) exists. The ProGov continues to maintain that the so-called "magical" abilities displayed by some individuals is in fact some kind of psionic mutation, but it doesn't make

much of a diff to the average C-3 kicking back in front of the vid watching the evening news what you want to call it. Magic is magic.

The Status of Mages

Mages (people with the Magical Aptitude advantage) are considered "dangerous elements" by the ProGov and are either feared by the general public or secretly romanticized and thought of as heroes. They receive either a +2 or -2 Reaction Modifier from anyone who knows that they are mages. Very few people react neutrally when meeting a mage.

Generally, anyone who is identified by the government as having magical aptitude will be taken and placed in special "training" for their own protection. Their families are then offered C-2 (or better) status and kept in comfort, so long as the mage cooperates. This training usually leads to that person becoming a witch-smeller for the NERCC or some other ProGov agency (see below). The korporations also recruit those with magical potential by offering them economic incentives and legal protection from persecution.

These magicians are all licensed and carefully regulated by the ProGov. Part of the licensing process involves the implantation of a cortex bomb that the authorities can use to keep potentially dangerous magicians in line. Many Low-C and nullo mages escape the identification process along with a few rare High-C mages who learn to conceal their aptitude magically. Knowingly failing to register magical ability with the ProGov is considered a Class B Felony. Mages who are also members of an occult organization are considered subversives and automatically have C-4/R status (see p. CW33).

Many magicians choose to flee the United States for greener pastures in Russia or Japan, where they usually end up the virtual slaves of one of the major korps. Magicians also seem to gravitate toward conflict areas and rebellions; the Alaskan Special Operations Forces are known to include a couple of mages as are the rebel forces in Cuba.

Mana Level

By 2043, most of the world has attained a level of Normal Mana (***GURPS Basic Set*****,** p. 147) with some areas that are still Low Mana. Some powerful sacred sites like Teotihuacan, Stonehenge and some American Indian ritual grounds are reputed to have High Mana at certain times of the year, but so far this has not been confirmed. If it is true, there are probably no more than a dozen or so such sites in the world.

At the current mana level, only those with the Magical Aptitude advantage can cast spells. Many magicians and researchers have questioned whether or not the mana level will continue to rise. This question is of great concern to the ProGov and is the subject of their most intensive magical research.

Magical Aptitude

"The Talent," as it is most commonly known, is still a rare gift. Perhaps one person in 1,000 has Magery 1, one in 10,000 has Magery 2 and one in 100,000 has Magery 3. Of these, only 20% will have any real knowledge of magic. So in a city of half a million people, there will be 500 or so potential mages, only 100 of which will have any more than a small handful of spells. Since Magical Aptitude is so rare, there is a 10-point Unusual Background cost for being a mage.

The exact cause of Magical Aptitude has not yet been determined, although the ProGov and nearly every korp and government in the world would like to figure it out. Numerous projects are under way to determine if the Talent is some kind of mutation or latent gene, or is linked to some unknown environmental cause. Some even speculate that the Talent is culturally based, owing the greater incidence of mages among so-called "primitive" cultures as well as in the occult sub-culture. Most scholars discount this theory and attribute the higher incidence of mages in these areas to the greater ability of those cultures to recognize and bring out the latent Talent in their members.

The ProGov, and other world powers, have discovered that the only current reliable means of detecting Magical Aptitude is through the use of magic like the Aura spell (see p. B163). This makes potential magicians very difficult to detect, although organizations like the NERCC have trained "witch smellers" who know the Aura, Mage Sight and Seek Magic spells and are used as "bloodhounds" to track down other potential mages. Many of the Talented loathe such individuals as traitors to their own kind, while the NERCC regards them with a combination of respect and distrust.

Spells

Unlike in most fantasy worlds, magic in the One-and-Twenty is not an organized and codified science . . . yet. Most mages are self-taught, or learned their spells from another magician. Everyone has their own pet theories on the proper rituals for casting this or that spell and the capable mages are working constantly on developing more sophisticated and powerful spells. The rarity of people with high levels of Magery has also inhibited magical research, since the more powerful spells can only be cast by them.

All of the spells from ***GURPS Magic*** and ***GURPS Grimoire*** are available except for the following Colleges: Enchantment, Gate, Meta-Spells, Necromantic and Technological.

Enchantment spells remain very rare. The only commonly known Enchantment spell is Powerstone (see p. B161) which many magicians use to provide them with the boost needed to cast powerful spells on the streets without exhausting themselves. Other enchantments are very difficult to find and learn, as well as difficult to perform, since conditions for producing enchantments are generally less than ideal, and most magicians are not interested in devoting months they could be using for spell research to creating magical items. Some minor items have been created by magicians for their own use, and some of the government and korporate magical think-tanks have performed some fairly sophisticated enchantments, but even these are rare. Possession of enchanted items is illegal in the United States, and such items are confiscated by the NERCC if they are detected and the owner is detained so that he can be questioned about where the item came from.

Gate spells are completely unknown at present. Rumors abound that some magicians have developed the Teleport spell, a rumor of which the NERCC would very much like to determine the veracity. At present, theories of teleportation, spacial gates and time travel are just that, theories. Practical Gate or Teleportation spells would be incredibly valuable to a number of parties, who would go to any lengths to ensure that they were the only ones with knowledge of them. The discovery of the Timeport spell (***GURPS Grimoire*****,** p. 46) by an underground mage could lead into an interesting *Terminator*-style adventure where the player-characters are sent back in time to prevent the assassination of President Burris, followed by a squad of crack NERCC agents who are ordered to stop them.

The meta-spells Activate Runes, Reflect, Great Ward, Drain Mana and Restore Mana are unknown. All of the meta-spells listed in ***Grimoire*** (see pp. G69-74) are unknown except for Seek Magic, which is used by NERCC "bloodhounds" to track down other magic-users (making knowledge of the Conceal Magic spell very useful).

Necromantic spells are still in their infancy, and few magicians are willing to tamper with them at present. Resurrection (***GURPS Magic*****,** p. 45) is not possible, and may never be discovered, but some magicians have summoned spirits of the dead and other beings that some claim are demons. Some of the more daring young Turks tinker with the mechanics of life and death and the summoning of spirits and demons, but just as many of them have been devoured by creatures they have summoned and not been able to control.

The NERCC and most other governments crack down hard on necromantic magic, mostly because the implications of it frighten them greatly should they become public knowledge.

Spells from the Tech college (see p. G94) have not yet been discovered or invented, although there are rumored to be hip cybermages working on strange blends of magic and technology. Many mages (especially traditionalists and tribals) tend to be somewhat technophobic, proclaiming that magic is a better and "cleaner" option than technology. Some suggest that magic and technology are not compatible in anything but the grossest mechanical sense and that Technological spells might not even be possible.

Spell Research

The Thaumatology skill (see p. G7) is used to develop and design new spell theories using the New Invention rules (see pp. B186-187). The skill can be used by non-magicians as well, but mages have an easier time both learning and using it, as well as a practical means to test their theories! Normals can develop theories and even design spells, but they will have no idea if their spell works until a mage learns and attempts to cast it.

Very high Thaumatology skill is very rare, even rarer than magical aptitude. Combined with the high penalties for Inventing, spell design from scratch is very difficult. Highly skilled magical theoreticians are worth their weight in gold and are almost universally kept under close observation and tight security by the governments and korps that employ them.

Most mages don't invent their own spells from nothing. Instead they scavenge from a diverse range of magical source material; old books, datafiles, anthropology texts and "New Age" material for scraps of useful magical knowledge that might give them the clues they need to piece together a new spell. The Research skill (see p. B62) is essential for this, although many street and nullo magicians use the default for it.

The result of this is that magical knowledge is considered extremely valuable. Net-pirates can do a brisk business in black occult data and the formula for a useful new spell is valuable enough for several governments and korps to kill for. The more basic prerequisite spells are better known, while the more advanced second- and third-tier spells are correspondingly more rare. Powerful "master" level spells like Earthquake are virtually unknown except to some very powerful, legendary magicians.

NPCs

NERCC Division X Officer

As the NERCC Elite Enforcer (***GURPS Cyberworld*****,** p. 34) with the following modifications: +1 (or more) levels of Strong Will and Occultism skill at IQ (higher for more experienced officers). Some rare DivX officers may have levels of Magic Resistance. DivX officers normally carry laser pistols as sidearms, especially since an unfortunate incident involving a subversive mage with the Reverse Missiles spell.

NERCC "Witch Smeller"

ST 10, DX 11, IQ 13, HT 12

Basic Speed 5.75, Move 5

Dodge 5, Parry 5

Advantages: Magery 1 (or more), Unusual Background [10].

Disadvantages: Enforced Duty (to NERCC), Social Stigma (turncoat) among other mages. Cowardice and Honesty are also common.

Cyberware: Cortex Bomb.

Skills: Aura Reading-13, Computer Operation/TL8-13, Occultism-12, Research-11, Stealth-10.

Spells: Analyze Magic-12, Aura-13, Detect Magic-15, Light-12, Seek Magic-14, Seeker-12, Shield-13.

These sorry individuals are magicians who are pressed into service by the NERCC to track down other mages who might have escaped the law. Most are unwilling agents who are forced into service through the use of implants and

threats against their loved ones. A few are traitors who have turned their backs on their own kind in exchange for some degree of safety and status working for the ProGov. Witch Smellers are employed by Division X as "point men" to find the way to rogue magicians so that the troopers can deal with them. It is rumored on the street that NERCC has a small cadre of combat-trained magicians that they use on special missions who know several offensive and defensive spells at high skill levels, but it is likely that this force - if it exists - isn't very large since the NERCC fears letting any magician get too powerful.

Underground Magicians

Most of the magicians in the Occult Underground are Magery 1 minor-leaguers who know a handful of spells that mostly allow them to escape NERCC detection and aid their profession. Some rarer adepts have higher levels of Magery, more spells and greater skill, but these magicians take great efforts to conceal their abilities from the Witch Smellers and keep their activities secret. Some are part of the resistance movement while others are near-legendary mercenaries who sell their abilities to the highest bidder.

Hooks

The following are some possible adventure ideas for including magic in a ***GURPS Cyberworld*** campaign.

Emergence

GMs who want to include magic in an existing ***Cyberworld*** game can simply take the events described in the timeline and make them happen in the here and now of 2043, with magical abilities first starting to emerge from secrecy and NERCC's Division X cracking down on mages. Perhaps one of the player-characters discovers that he is actually a latent mage!

Arcane Lore

Magical knowledge is highly valuable, and characters might find themselves working to dig up some lost bit of lore that can be sold to the highest bidder, or perhaps to learn and use it themselves for or against the ProGov and the NERCC. And if the adventurers know about it, they can be sure that other parties will be interested as well.

Infiltration

The Occult Underground gives the PCs a difficult mission: infiltrate the NERCC to help save other mages from being recruited as Witch-Smellers and to start an "underground railroad" to smuggle latent mages out of America to safety in Alaska. Many challenges will greet them, including perhaps magical mind probes from other NERCC magicians, in working their way inside and trying to save others.

A Minor Emergency: A *GURPS Black Ops* Adventure by Gene Seabolt

Introduction

This adventure uses the ***GURPS Black Ops*** setting. Game Masters running conspiracy, secret-agent or Mythos campaigns under a different setting or mechanics may be able to adapt it to their needs. Those intending to play characters in *A Minor Emergency* should not read past *The Mission.*

History

In its half-century of exploring and destroying the paranormal, the Company has dealt with bizarre circumstances more often than not. Things often happen that "never could happen," but not all of these originate in the shadowy world of Greys and evil psis. Two of the Company's own black ops, Nolan and Mia Mathers, created one of the stranger crises in 1985. They announced that they planned to have a child.

This, to say the least, violated Company policy. From day one, ops have been under orders to avoid procreation unless assigned one of the handful of outside secret identities requiring a family as cover. Neither of the Mathers - who had been romantically involved for about two years at the time - could claim this loophole. Both also were valued, veteran agents who graduated from the Academy in 1982. Nolan had forged a reputation in the Combat department with his macho charm and knife-across-the-throat tactics. Science op Mia's colossal, no-nonsense intellect and huge telepathic potential had set her apart - though her cold manner and inability to communicate with Greys limited her standing among her fellow active ops and the administration, respectively.

Neither backed down from their stated intention to have a child, and Mia was already entering her second trimester. The situation might have gone unsalvaged except for Mia's trump card: she intended to train the child, from birth, to become a black op. Her and Nolan's genetics combined with a lifetime of training could create a superagent to put even the incredible black ops to shame, she argued.

Tempted with this proposal, the Company blinked first. The Mathers avoided disavowal, though they did endure punitive grief to show other ops that no further exceptions to the childbearing policy would get by - at least, until the Mathers experiment produced results. Mia gave birth to a boy on Dec. 16, 1985. She named him Dexter; many an op has argued whether it represents the one bit of humor she's ever displayed. The child's father took to calling him "grunto." His mother took to training him. They made their home at the Lab, the Science-department headquarters beneath the Gulf of Mexico.

The Wonder Years

Till the child reached age 5, things went fairly smoothly. Mia taught Dexter seven languages while he remained a toddler, had him reading by his fourth birthday and promised him geometry lessons as a fifth-birthday present. Nolan contributed a bit to the education, providing a perfect replica of a snubnose .38 as a rattle and teaching Dexter not to tuck his thumb into his fist when punching or into his mouth when teething. Mostly he provided an immense emotional anchor: while Mia did the child-raising, he roared his pride in both to anyone who would listen. Whatever strange bond existed between the outgoing Combat op and the mirthless Science op only deepened as Dexter grew.

Then Dexter started testing his knowledge. Mostly humor sprang from the first incidents, such as a 6-year-old Dexter sneaking a giant cockroach out of the specimen enclosures at the Lab, using a homemade bit and bridle to ride the beast. Mia went into a hygienic frenzy, but the other ops laughed. As the boy aged - and the pranks grew more cunning

and inspired - fewer and fewer bystanders found themselves amused. Nor did the victims.

The situation escalated until six months ago, when Dexter, now 12, convinced Combat administrators that the Greys intended to set up a base at the Pro Football Hall of Fame in Ohio. Of all his many talents, none had grown more quickly than his expertise in data analysis. Though denied access to Blacknet, the pre-teen had mastered the Internet and other media outlets. He knew how to survey them all for seemingly innocent factoids that led to a much larger, much darker picture. More importantly, at least for several red-faced Combat ops, he knew how to plant the same sort of information for others to "stumble" across.

This prank got him confined to his room at the Lab, though only after a mission had been assembled and a team formed. Three days later, he disappeared.

The Mission

The Matherses' situation is common Company knowledge; few active black ops are more well-known than Nolan and Mia and everyone's heard of Dexter. Every player should be familiar with the *History* and *The Wonder Years* data in the present day.

The adventure starts when the player characters receive an Omicron summons to a mission briefing on short notice. Once they assemble, a Combat op steps up and announces, "The biggest mystery in the history of the Company just got bigger. Nolan and Mia Mathers have disappeared.

"As most of you know, they've been going crazy trying to figure out what happened to Dexter. Yesterday, Mia failed to show up for a refresher course that was on her schedule. Omicron didn't turn her up. Nolan was buzzed; he didn't answer, either."

The briefing agent raises one eyebrow and lowers his voice. "Right now, they're not listed as AWOL. This is not a hunter squad. It's a Company decision that their falling outside of normal communications channels does not constitute an emergency sufficient to alert Argus. So Argus doesn't know, and won't until their next regular briefing. The bad news is, that's in a week from yesterday. If you don't have results by then, chances are you'll get yanked and some hard-core secops will have to go looking for scalps.

"We want them back. Find them, hear them out, and convince them to come to their senses. Now it doesn't take a rocket-science op to figure out this has something to do with Dexter. Maybe they found a new lead in his case and decided to handle it themselves. If so, it took them six months. You've got six days."

GMs' Eyes Only

A Minor Emergency is designed for flexibility. First, several important details are vague or unaddressed. For instance, is this an official, Company-sanctioned mission or are prominent Combat ops who are loyal to Nolan Mathers staging it "off the books"? The GM can decide what best fits his campaign.

Second, the narrative is presented as a series of climax points, with seeds by which the PCs can reach the next one. Rather than move the players lock-step along the storyline, this attempts to allow their own initiative to shine. A Technology op and an Intelligence op can reach the same point from starkly different directions, or the GM can allow the PCs to go off on a tangent with intent to plug the results back into the modular proceedings.

Finally, this adventure attempts to illustrate the huge potential that any single black op boasts. It purposefully limits lethality - if the PCs don't come away from the mission briefing realizing that they're to ask questions first, shoot as a last resort, then the GM might want to throw a hint their way. They should have to stretch their non-Guns skill, especially their other combat skills if all goes according to plan. Also, their adversaries will illustrate what black ops can do with their abilities, tactics and techniques. Whether the PCs excel or take a beating, they should learn something.

For this last reason, the GM should reserve this adventure until after his PCs have seen a few missions. That will give him time to see where he might best challenge and/or educate them, and make the subtle pursuit of fellow black ops into the novelty that it should be.

The Locked Rooms

The first step in this mission entails getting an idea - any idea - where the Matherses might have gone. A squad member should realize this most likely hinges upon figuring out where Dexter went.

That's a topic the Company has already investigated to no avail. Even worse, the sec-ops who checked into Dexter's disappearance couldn't even figure out how he got out of his room - much less a Company base submerged in saltwater.

The squad should investigate in whatever style it wants, but eventually these actions (taken in Dexter's room at the Lab) will divulge where Dexter went:

- Checking out the history of Dexter's computer usage (and a Computer Operations roll at -10) will reveal that he had been following a series of strange happenings across the U.S. and in a few foreign cities. (An experienced security op who makes an Administration roll will realize the Company is actively pursuing the same investigation, so far without results.)

  These happenings comprise several cases of someone finding human skin, usually too decomposed to identify or DNA-test, in out-of-the-way places. Just the skin, nothing else, and never twice in the same area. What the Company and Dexter know is that a missing-persons report invariably was filed within a few miles of the site some time prior to the discovery of the skin.

- Another Computer Operations roll at -5 will reveal that Dexter had hacked into the reservations programs of most every major airline.

- A Criminology roll will lead an op to check that, indeed, Dexter's searches discovered reservations for trips by every person missing prior to skin-sightings - and all had a common destination: New Orleans.

- An Alertness roll at -5 will notice an old ammo box filled with a huge variety of printouts, news clippings, etc. Going through the clippings will reveal that most of them pertain to a few topics apparently of interest to Dexter.

  A roll against Empathy, Psychology-5 or Criminology-8 will make *the back* of one clipping stand out to the ferreting black op: a shipping schedule for the region of the Gulf of Mexico in which the Lab lies. Several oil tankers passed nearby en route to New Orleans.

- An Administration roll at -7 (-3 for science ops) will recall that all Lab visitors must log in any inventory brought to the base. Dexter was allowed on escorted excursions to the surface world in the past. A check of his log and a Scuba-2, Engineering (Mechanical)-2 or Physics-5 roll will reveal that on different trips he brought back all the components not easily acquired in the Lab of a makeshift scuba outfit.

Similar efforts on the Matherses' trails will reveal nothing. As experienced ops, they're way too good at covering their tracks. Innovative PC techniques could uncover the above information in a different way.

No amount of probing will figure out how Dexter got out of his locked room . . .

The Big Sleazy

These leads should send the squad to New Orleans, a city with enough paranormal history that the Company has printed its own, special guidebook.

Nothing will reveal any trace of the Mathers family, but any of a variety of methods will reveal that New Orleans, very recently, has suffered its own rash of castoff-skin discoveries. (If no one bothers to check, give them a newspaper headline stating, "More Human Skin Discovered.") The PCs should realize for themselves that this deviates from the previous pattern of solitary sightings.

However long they take to get to it, the PCs should realize the futility of tracking the Mathers and focus on the skin sightings. Shortly after they do this, they're attacked.

Random Violence

The GM may use a lot of latitude in laying out the attack, but it should be conducted by several, seemingly random New Orleans residents who shouldn't even know each other. They should use wild overkill (such as walking into a construction-supply outlet, shooting everyone, stealing a case of dynamite, then hours later lobbing the stolen goods at the black ops). They should use tactics meant to ensure they get away, despite the overkill.

Chances are, the squad will survive with ease. The attackers are ordinary folks, after all. Make it very tough for the PCs to capture an adversary in the process, though. (If using the dynamite, they lob it from a balcony of a busy hotel then disappear into the fleeing crowds.) If they don't capture an assailant, they're left shaking their heads (and evading the authorities, who will want to ask a few questions).

If they do capture one, particularly in pieces, they should soon come to realize this is not a human, but an alien creature of apparently human intelligence, externally a perfect replica of some New Orleans resident. The creature can in all ways act human. It will say nothing, just glower, ignore any level of interrogation and await opportunity to escape. Treat it as having roughly average human stats, physically. The Company has never encountered this sort of alien before.

If the squad includes a member with Psi Sense, a successful roll will detect usage of psionic powers at all times during the combat. This may reveal (depending on the roll) that the power emanates from a direction passing through the northern French Quarter, from a distance indicating said location, that the Telepathy power was in play, that some not-quite-right version of Telesend was used, that the attackers were the recipients of the Telesend and that the psi's personality is . . . if the telepathic black op does this well, they get an overwhelming image of something obscenely *different*, then pass out. If a player objects that this is a *black op* passing out, point out that the result accounts for the character's superhuman conditioning. That's why he's still breathing.

Regardless of the combat results, or how much the squad learns, the attack will make the local news. The Matherses will now know that black ops have tracked them to New Orleans.

Fire and Ice

The Matherses won't know the squad's intentions, a cause for some concern since by Company policy they're subject to immediate execution. They will decide that it's too dangerous to leave a squad of ops on their tails so close to the conclusion of their own work. Therefore, they'll soon ambush the ops themselves, though in less violent fashion.

The GM can use this encounter to school his players a little. If he wants to highlight a mistake they often make, he can have the Matherses take advantage of it; these experienced ops likely will know the details of any PC op's shortcomings. Barring other GM inspiration, they'll set it up in this way:

Nolan will backtrack the squad and begin following them. (Being short on foolishness, he and Mia prepared for this contingency, and invented a short-range "tracker" that stealthily signals and tracks response from the squads' Omicron devices. Since he starts out knowing exactly where the squad was when attacked, he'll likely get within range.) Within a few hours he should be able to discern who is in the squad (after all, he'll know many of the PCs on sight).

Nolan will then contact Mia. With him tracking and coordinating, she'll move ahead of the squad and lie in wait. In

disguise, she'll brush past the squad (taking the instant of eye contact she needs) and use her psi powers to read the mind of the target Nolan designated. Likely, he'll select one of the combat ops, as they tend to have the lowest Will scores.

If she reads the target mind and discovers the squad means them no harm (or means to at least talk first), then the couple will set up the ambush detailed below but stop to talk first. More likely, she'll fail or get partial information, in which case the couple will spring their ambush, then talk to the subdued ops. (Even if the single target op indicates willingness to talk, she won't be confident that the whole squad agrees without a real good Telereceive roll.) If she finds out the squad means harm, they'll spring the ambush and confine the ops.

If a squad member recognizes her during this attempt, she'll follow roughly the same tactics planned for the ambush while Nolan rushes up from behind and does likewise.

To trigger their ambush, the couple will hustle back to their prepared site, then forge an Omicron-relayed message to the squad from the Company. This will indicate that the Company's own surveillance just picked up someone logging into Blacknet from a phone in the Amalgated Insurance offices on the seventh floor of a downtown office building.

When the squad arrives, they'll discover the seventh is the top floor. What they probably won't discover is that the top three floors have been closed for renovations which have yet to reach the seventh; the Matherses will scam away the workers and remove all evidence except on floors five and six just prior to the squad's arrival. They want a little privacy, and the construction's closing of the stairwells means the squad will have to take the elevator or get real inventive . . .

When the squad reaches the seventh floor, they'll see the insurance office at the end of a narrow (2-hex wide) hall lined with doors. The hall is rigged for video (-10 to vision rolls to notice if anyone thinks to look). If the squad stopped between lobby and seventh floor to swap concealable armor and weapons for real battle gear, the Matherses will be long gone by the time the elevator doors finish opening. If not, once the last squad member passes the second door down, the fun starts.

Mia will pop out of a side door at the far end of the hall. (Not concerned about a fair fight, she and Nolan will be battle-garbed and wearing filtration gear.) Wielding dual Dualshots, she'll strafe the squad with chemical Sleep (see ***Black Ops***, p. 115) rounds at maximum rate of fire. She's not trained for dual-weapon use and doesn't much care; she wants to inflict random hits throughout the group. Any head or neck hit or torso hit from the front means the target must roll vs. the sleep agent. Arm hits from the front also require a roll 50 percent of the time.

At the same time, that second door down from the elevator will itself pop out. Nolan has removed the hinges and attached handles to it. He will use it like a large shield to Slam squad members from the rear (see ***Basic Set***, pp. 112-113), continuing to do so if he scores any overruns. Once he fails to overrun, he'll drop the door, Fast-Draw a baton and initiate melee with the nearest ops. The baton does shock damage per ***High-Tech***, p. 98, (essentially HT-3 roll to avoid Stun for 20-HT seconds on contact) in addition to normal damage. Note that most hand parries will still suffer the shock effects.

Mia will continue to strafe the party while closing to within her Telepathy's 3-yard range. She'll then use her psionics and Dualshots at the same time, most likely choosing to make Sleep attacks with her mental powers as well. If at any time she feels Nolan or herself is in mortal danger, she'll switch over to her armor-piercing ammo and riddle the offender. Nolan also is carrying his pistol, but won't use it except in the same circumstances. If Mia suffers severe wounds she'll try to Mindswitch with an intact squad member!

If all goes well, the Matherses enjoy excellent odds of subduing the entire squad. Regardless, if the squad minds its manners, one of the two sides will end up with the other bruised but relatively unhurt. If the squad seems at all open to explanation, the Matherses likely will reveal the backstory in hopes of recruiting their assistance.

The Backstory

The seeds of this outing actually sprang from the Company's sanctions after Mia announced her pregnancy. Aware that they might never enjoy the Company's full trust again, Mia secretly worked on ways to circumvent Omicron (***Black Ops***, p. 21) . . . just in case.

She hacked the device's most basic transmission protocols for the data that allowed her to develop her countermeasure. (This knowledge also served in good stead in tracking and misleading the PC squad.) Her spoofing technology is housed in twin metallic casings worn like football shoulder pads. It jams any incoming radio signals, while feeding the wearer's Omicron device false signals indicating that all is well. The bulky shoulderware has proven inconvenient, but comes closest to ensuring that no nasty Omicron secrets will be revealed on going AWOL.

The melee damaged one of Mia's devices (she slammed it on the door jamb when she started the ambush if she took no other damage), so the Company will soon penetrate her countermeasures and locate its missing ops.

When Dexter disappeared, the Matherses spent months searching for his trail in vain. Then Mia discovered the same information that the squad uncovered, though she had no way to erase it without the very attempt highlighting its existence. Still fearful of Company priorities, the Matherses had already determined they would handle any lead themselves. They left for New Orleans.

As the only overprotective black-op mother in existence, Mia wasted no time in scouring the city for a signal from any of the seven homing devices she'd implanted in Dexter as a newborn. After two days, her instruments located him in the northern French Quarter.

She also detected something else, not with her electronics but her psi. Some powerful, immensely alien consciousness was scanning the area and had found her. This chilled her, for given her utter inability to Telereceive Grey thoughts, she had reason to fear she couldn't act offensively against *any* alien mind.

Still, the Matherses pressed on, tracking Dexter's signal to an immense burial vault in an old cemetery. As they approached, though, a seemingly ordinary groundskeeper jumped them and the psi presence turned hostile, with a frightening power. The black ops carefully retreated, but Nolan tucked their "human" assailant under one arm in the process.

In Nolan's "debriefing" the groundskeeper's alien nature soon revealed itself. Mia's interrogation revealed something even more startling: she could read its mind! She soon ferreted out a horrible truth. This faux human was the offspring of a creature that thought of itself as The Superior. From within the vault, it psionically lured tourists in to be slowly consumed and replaced by its seed. These imitations had been establishing the species across the globe.

Apparently acting on a boyish impulse - or perhaps to regain some good graces with the Company - Dexter had traced the trail left by the Superior's children back to the source. Being far from a fully trained black op, he then failed to avoid being lured into The Superior's maw. Still, Mia's early training had given Dexter an incredible Will, and much to the creature's surprise this made the boy hard to digest. These many months later, Dexter is still just barely hanging on (he has 2 hit points left).

Meanwhile, The Superior learned of the Company and the black ops in its assaults on Dexter's psyche. It immediately began bolstering its defenses by luring every weak-Willed person on which it could lay its psionic tendrils.

By the time that Nolan and Mia had shown up, the earliest of these children had passed the threshold of time they could remain in human form (see ***The Superior***, p. 29) and assumed their alien forms. This created the rash of skin sightings that the squad noticed.

Needless to say, the Matherses are in a hurry and a bind. They won't allow the squad to just go in blasting - Dexter is inside the creature, being slowly eaten alive, and wouldn't endure the slightest collateral damage. They will welcome fire support if they can convince the squad to back their own breathlessly risky plan: Mia intends to physically enter the body of The Superior, then use Mindswitch on Dexter and use this vantage to assault the beast and free her son's body! Nolan will go in with her to pull Dexter out (in Mia's body), kick the crud out of the random internal organ and cut free Mia in Dexter's body if he can.

Should the secop or another member of the PC squad object to this level of hazard, the couple will do what they can to decommission the squad for long enough to see this through, though violence will be a last resort.

Stomaching the Results

With a little luck, the squad will now join the Matherses in this sortie before escorting them back to the Company fold. This can be as detailed or succinct as the GM cares to make it, though the setup allows it to be made a grand battle royale.

The PC ops should be allowed - encouraged even - to pull out all their heavy weapons for this assault. They'll be facing a new and relatively un-known threat. (The insight that Mia gained from the Superior's child won't include anymore detail than was given in the *Backstory*.) They'll also have several more "children" to deal with. The exact number is a GM option, but The Superior's had time to spit out more than 150. These servitors could easily have access to military hardware and tactics. Almost all will have Area Know-ledge of New Orleans that the ops likely will be doing without.

This setup offers another chance for the GM to point out any holes in his players' general tactics, given that The Superior may well be telepathically listening in as they draw up their plans. If they overlook a weakness in their operations in general confidence that no one will notice it, now's the time to spring it upon them.

Once the extras have been cleared away, entering the crypt will reveal that The Superior has burrowed out adjacent space for its own bulk; the crypt's roughly 10-by-10 yard area sits directly in front of its mouth. The Superior will challenge the squad with its own physical and psionic attacks, and the GM should reserve some children to further challenge the black ops during the Matherses' assault. Any op who joins the foray into the creature should first have to convince Nolan he won't lose his cool or judgment, and then receive an extra experience point should he survive his bravery.

See ***The Superior*** for further details.

Fallout

After tackling The Superior, any squad survivors should report back in with any surviving members of the Mathers family. If the mission was staged off the books, a cover-up will present Nolan and Mia as officially investigating the alien creature and the hunter squad as providing support. (The Company could easily pierce this sham, but likely will choose to let it be.) The squad, of course, would have to take part in this charade; doing so will earn the undying loyalty of Nolan, Mia and all of Nolan's fans (who can turn up anywhere).

If the squad was official, Nolan and Mia will earn a royal chewing-out this time, with real question of their being cashiered to retired status . . . or worse. The PCs should receive summons to a shadowy meeting of Argus and be asked for their input on what the Matherses merit. At least one player should be wise enough to suggest mercy. If they don't advise mercy, the Matherses will disappear and all those Nolan fans will hold a long, hard grudge. If they cautiously advise mercy, the couple will be retired. If they enthusiastically endorse the Matherses, they'll retain their active status and the PCs will enjoy the same favor described above.

Dexter, should he survive, will endure the mother of all tongue-lashings from Mia, should she. He might show up later in the campaign, aiding the PCs in the strangest ways.

Guns

On leaving the Company's embrace, Nolan and Mia Mathers didn't opt to discard the Company's technology as well. Along with their other black op gear, they brought along their favorite weapons. These are TL8 Company inventions, and may well exceed the leading weapons research in a given Black Ops campaign. If so, the GM should simply

replace them with something suitable.

If the weapons remain in the campaign, the PCs might be given access to them as well, though the rarity of the discontinued Riprock system can provide a way to limit access to this more abusable ordnance.

Nolan favors the Riprock rifle/pistol tandem while Mia carries two Dualshots in combat situations. For more subtle circumstances, Mia retains a single Dualshot (with the side-mounted clip removed to aid concealment) and Nolan generally uses the other. In rare cases, he might carry the Riprock pistol as well.

These weapons are designed under the ***GURPS Vehicles*** rules found in the second edition.

The Riprock System

This state-of-the-art electromagnetic weapon system proved a bit too . . . robust . . . even for the black ops. Development was suspended, but a few ops keep it in favor. The pistol, in particular, is tactically appalling to many ops given its slow rate of fire, but some make use of it as pocket artillery support.

The 60mm pistol and rifle share the same ammunition, which is individually loaded into internal magazines and weighs 1 pound per round. Each round incorporates its own A cell.

Generally, only explosive rounds are employed (the given statistics assume HEAT), since they weigh less than most kinetic munitions. Both weapons incorporate laser sights.

The Dualshot

This 10mm electrothermal SMG appears to be a large pistol featuring a dual feed (one magazine in the grip and one side-mounted). Ops often carry it with standard or armor-piercing slugs in one magazine and CHEM rounds in the other. These CHEM rounds create a 13"-radius cloud just large enough to reach a human target's nostrils when aimed at the chest (those outside the target hex are unaffected). It incorporates a laser sight.

Empty weight is 2.5 pounds; each 160-shot clip includes its own B cell and weighs 1/2 pound.

Weapons Table

Weapon	Malf	Type	Damage	SS	Acc	1/2D	Max	Wt	RoF	Shots	ST	Rcl	Cost
Dualshot	Ver.	Cr.	2 (2)	10	5	180	2,700	3.5	20	160(x2)	9	-1	$1,600
Dualshot w/CHEM	Ver.	Spcl.	per gas	10	5	120	1,800	3.5	20	160(x2)	9	-1	$1,600
Riprock Pistol	Ver.	Exp.	60 (10)	12	8	440	3,000	16.5	1/3	3	21	-4	$16,400
Riprock Rifle	Ver.	Exp.	60 (10)	17	11	440	3,000	30.5	3	9	15	-2	$21,800

The Superior

ST: 80-100 **Move/Dodge:** 1 **Size:** 24
DX: 11 **PD/DR:** 3/30 **Weight:** 10-12 tons
IQ: 10 **Damage:** 5d-1 cr **Habitat:** Sub
HT: 13/90+ **Reach:** 3

The Superior (every adult of the species thinks of itself as *The* Superior) is an alien entity intent on stealthily spreading its offspring. The adults average roughly 3 yards wide by 15 yards long. They possess a triangular cross-section, with a hard, horny hide of a purple-red color. They possess no motive limbs, simply a pair of long ST 25 foretendrils ending in pods similar to a jellyfish's poison buds in intent and appearance.

Their vertical mouth commands the creature's entire foresection; it rarely fully closes and can open wide to reveal multiple, tendrillike tongues. Several green eyes overhang each side of this impressive orifice.

Superiors average a Telepathy power of 15, and skill of 16 in Aspect, Psi Sense, Telereceive, Telescan, Telesend and their own special Mind Duplicate skill. They average skill 20 in Mind Shield and Suggest.

Superiors prefer to set up a nest in an urban center, using their ability to crawl at Move 1 and burrow through anything softer than bedrock to make a tight, underground space into a tight, underground space just big enough to fit The Superior and its prey. This protects most of its length from attack and conceals its activities, which is a primary goal. Despite their incredible psi powers, Superiors try to work subtly, though no one knows whether at some "critical mass" a large Superior population would change its tactics . . .

Once it has established a lair, the creature then uses its psi powers to select and lure prey, preferably humans visiting from abroad. Most victims, upon reaching the lair, roll a Fright Check at -5; this often softens up their psyches for what follows. The Superior shoves the victim into its maw with its foretendrils.

In the mouth, the tongues can shove an unharmed victim into the stomach. Treat as a contest of ST vs. ST 20 each turn; the first contestant to win three more contests than the other wins. If the victim wins, he must scramble back out into the hex in front of the mouth or start a new series of contests. A willing victim can pass through the mouth in two turns.

In the stomach, victims surprisingly find they can see (outside light filters in when the mouth is open at -4 to light conditions in the lair). An adult stomach averages 2 yards wide by 5 yards long and is equipped with its own tendrils. These attempt to pin victims to the stomach lining. Use the tongue mechanics, except that victims exit *to* the mouth (where they must, of course, battle the tongues again).

Once a victim is pinned to the stomach, enough tendrils ensnare him to ensure physical helplessness.

A Superior can process up to 16 victims at once, though usually they limit themselves to roughly one at a time to minimize their chance of detection.

A Superior can only digest its pinned victim in tandem with using its Mind Duplicate to replicate him. Each day it rolls its Mind Duplicate vs. the victim's Will, doing one point of HT damage for every point by which it succeeds. When its victim reaches HT 0 it dies (and is soon fully digested) and a perfect, alien replica crawls up from further down The Superior's anatomy. This process generally takes a couple of days, but can take much longer. For this reason, Superiors generally try to avoid high-Will victims, unless a nosy one needs to be disposed of anyway.

Victims become physiologically attached to a Superior in the digestion process, and receive nourishment from the creature's body if they hang around long enough to need it. Theoretically, a Superior with several high-Will cases of "indigestion" may need to go through low-Will victims rapidly to keep its nourishment up.

Superiors also avoid eating telepaths like bad apples. Not only do these psis tend toward strong Will, but the Mind Duplicate process establishes a two-way link treated as Telereceive, at a "roll made by" level equal to the victim's Telepathy power. Unfortunately for the Superior, their bodily control doesn't allow them to just regurgitate a telepath (or anyone else); they must mentally duel them if foolish enough to eat one.

In combat, an adult Superior can use its foretendrils twice per round to bludgeon for 5d-1 damage (don't forget the Knockback, usually aimed at its mouth), or impale with their pods for 2d damage and a further DX-4 and 2d poison damage (both halved on a HT-4 roll). Each pod holds three doses of toxin recharged in an hour each. The toothed maw can do 7d cutting damage to anything in the hex directly before it, though not to anything within it! During the turn of a bite attempt, the mouth and stomach confines are darkened, but a Superior must leave its mouth open for at least one turn after every bite attempt.

The tongues and stomach tendrils possess DR 2, a Dodge of 11 and 10 HP. Severing two will count as winning a Contest of ST in the mouth or stomach. Generally, severing six will free a victim of digestion. The foretendrils claim

DR 8, Dodge 9 and 25 HP. The huge DR of body and tendrils suggests their armor is psychically augmented.

A Superior can also command its children in combat. They obey without question, and its usage of psionics upon them is treated as +10 to Power.

These replicas of the victims are pubescent Superiors. They will possess the same attributes as the person they replaced, including memories and skills, except that their IQ won't exceed 10 and they will have Strong Will +10. They will return to the victim's home, maintain the identity long enough to cloud suspicion, then find a quiet place to shed their humanoid skin and slither off to establish a lair and grow to adulthood.

These children can only maintain their human form for 20 x HT days before they must assume their alien form. Once they (literally) shed their human guise, the parent Superior loses its control of them.

Nothing is known of origin or further intent, since these creatures have just been discovered.

Nolan Mathers

Age 42; 6'2", 235 lbs.; brown hair cropped short and hazel eyes
ST 21 [120] **IQ** 16 [80] **Speed:** 9
DX 20 [175] **HT** 16 [80] **Move:** 11*
Damage: *Thrust 2d; Swing 4d-1*
Dodge: 10* **Parry:** 15*
* Includes bonuses for Running and Combat Reflexes; Acrobatics and Body Language skills may further increase Dodge and/or Parry.

Point Total: 850

Advantages
- Alertness +3 [15]
- Charisma +2 [10]
- Combat Reflexes [15]
- High Pain Threshold [10]
- Luck [15]
- Patron (The Company; 15 or less) [105]
- Reputation (+3 among black ops; always) [5]
- Strong Will +5 [20]
- Toughness DR 2 [25]
- Very Fit [15]
- Zeroed [10]

Disadvantages
- Bad Temper [-10]
- Extremely Hazardous Duty [-20]
- Insomniac [-10]
- Secret (Black op) [-30]
- Sense of Duty (Black ops) [-10]
- Sense of Duty ("Family") [-5]

Quirks
- Smokes little cigars [-1]
- Calls women "honey" when intent is to irritate [-1]
- Never stands in front of door when opening it [-1]
- Cracks knuckles just before a fight [-1]
- Prone to use explosives [-1]

Skills

Acting-16 [2]; Animal Handling-15 [2]; Anthropology-15 [2]; Area Knowledge (Earth)-18 [4]; Armoury (Beam Handguns)-14 [1/2]; Armoury (Hand Weapons)-14 [1/2]; Armoury (Rifles & Handguns)-16 [2]; Armoury (Vehicular Weaponry)-14 [1/2]; Artificial Intelligence-14 [1]; Astronomy-14 [1]; Bard-18 [2]; Beam Weapons (Lasers)-23 [2]*; Bicycling-19 [1/2]; Boating-18 [1/2]; Body Language-16 [4]; Botany-14 [1]; Bow-18 [1]; Boxing-21 [4]; Camouflage-15 [1/2]; Chemistry-14 [1]; Chess-15 [1/2]; Climbing-20 [2]; Computer Operation-16 [1]; Computer Programming-14 [1]; Crossbow-19 [1/2]; Dancing-18 [1/2]; Demolition-17 [4]; Diplomacy-20 [12]; Driving (Automobile)-21 [4]; Driving (Tracked)-21 [4]; Ecology-14 [1]; Electronics (Computers)-15 [2]; Electronics Operation (Communications)-14 [1/2]; Engineer (Bombs and Traps)-15 [2]; Engineer (Combat Engineering)-14 [1]; Engineer (Electrical)-14 [1]; Engineer (Mechanical)-14 [1]; Engineer (Nuclear Weapons)-14 [1]; Explosive Ordnance Disposal-14 [1]; Fast Draw (Pistol)-20 [1/2] (Sword)-20 [1/2] ; Fencing-18 [1/2]; First Aid-17 [2]; Forward Observer-14 [1/2]; Gambling-16 [2]; Garrote-20 [1]; Geology-14 [1]; Gunner (Machine Gun)-24 [8]*; Guns (Flamethrower)-21 [1/2]*; Guns (Pistol)-25 [8]*; Guns (Rifle)-24 [4]*; Hiking-14 [1/2]; History (specialized: Military and Martial Arts)-14 [1]; Judo-21 [8]; Karate-21 [8]; Knife-20 [1]; Leadership-18 [2]; Literature-14 [1]; Mathematics-17 [6]; Mechanic (Automobile)-14 [1/2]; Mechanic (Helicopter)-14 [1/2]; Meditation-14 [2]; Mind Block-20 [10]; Motorcycle (Medium and Heavy)-19 [1/2]; Naturalist-15 [2]; NBC Warfare-14 [1/2]; No-Landing Extraction-14 [1/2]; Nuclear Physics-14 [2]; Orienteering-15 [1]; Parachuting-19 [1/2]; Philosophy-14 [1]; Physician-14 [1]; Physics (specialized: Ballistics)-16 [4]; Physiology-14 [2]; Physiology (Grey)-14 [2]; Piloting (Helicopter)-20 [2]; Piloting (Light Airplane)-20 [2]; Poetry-14 [1/2]; Powerboat-18 [1/2]; Professional Skill (Machinist)-14 [1/2]; Psychology (specialized: Combat Psychology)-15 [2]; Psychology (Grey)-14 [1]; Running-16 [4]; Savoir-Faire-15 [1/2]; Scuba-14 [1/2]; Shortsword-22 [8]; Sign Language (AMESLAN)-14 [1/2]; Skating-18 [1]; Skiing-18 [1]; Spear-18 [1/2]; Speed Load (Clip-loading)-19 [1/2]; Stealth-21 [4]; Strategy-14 [1]; Streetwise-16 [2]; Swimming-19 [1/2]; Tactics-17 [6]; Telegraphy-15 [1/2]; Throwing-18 [1]; Traps-15 [1]; Wrestling-20 [2]; Writing-14 [1/2]; Xenology-14 [1]; Zoology-13 [1/2]

* Includes +2 for IQ.

Includes +1 for Combat Reflexes.

Martial Arts Maneuvers

Arm Lock-23 [1]; Axe Kick-20 [1]; Back Kick-21 [2]; Choke Hold-20 [1]; Close Combat (Short-sword)-19 [2]; Elbow Strike-20 [1/2]; Eye Gouging-15 [4]; Ground Fighting (Karate)-20 [4]; Head Butt-16 [1/2]; Head Lock-20 [4]; Hit Location (Shortsword)-22 [4]; Jab-21 [2]; Kicking-21 [2]; Roundhouse Punch-20 [1]; Slip-10 [4]; Spinning Punch-21 [2].

Languages

English-16 (native); German-15 [1]; Spanish-15 [1]

Weapons

See ***Guns***.

Nolan Mathers has built himself into a Company legend, but as he likes to point out, he's "done it the hard way." With 48 missions under his belt, he ranks among the most experienced active ops, and always leads his squads. His charm and diplomacy make him the favorite for this; his experience and tactical skills make him the best candidate.

Despite his popularity and normally easygoing way, many ops have seen him completely blister someone when the situation called for it. He can transform a veteran op into putty with a few choice words. This ability to switch from silver to acid tongue just adds to his reputation.

Some old hands have even seen Nolan lose his considerable temper. A few have even survived to tell about it.

Assume that Mathers knows any of his TL-based skills at the TL appropriate for the campaign. That means that if he retains his TL8 firearms, he would take a -1 penalty with everyday TL7 gear.

Mia Mathers

Age 38; 5'10", 160 lbs.; brown hair cropped short and blue eyes
ST 14 [45] **IQ** 20 [175] **Speed:** 8
DX 16 [80] **HT** 16 [80] **Move:** 10*
Damage: *Thrust 1d; Swing 2d*
Dodge: 9* **Parry:** 13*
* Includes bonuses for Running and Combat Reflexes.

Point Total: 850

Advantages

Alertness +3 [15]
Combat Reflexes [15]
High Pain Threshold [10]
Patron (The Company; 15 or less) [105]
Strong Will +5 [20]
Toughness DR 1 [10]
Unusual Background (Psionic) [50]
Very Fit [15]
Zeroed [10]

Disadvantages

Cyber-Rejection [-10]
Extremely Hazardous Duty [-20]
Guilt Complex (Dexter) [-5]
No Sense of Humor [-10]
Secret (Black op) [-30]
Sense of Duty ("Family") [-5]
Vow (Psi-ops' Code) [-5]
Workaholic [-5]

Psionics

Telepathy Power 12, Eye Contact Only [48]
Aspect-17 [1/2]
Illusion-25, Instantaneous [17]
Mind Shield-20 [4]
Mindswitch-25, Instantaneous [17]
Mindwipe-19 [2]
Psi Sense-18 [1]
Sleep-25, Instantaneous [17]
Telecontrol-20, Instantaneous [5]
Telereceive-25, Instantaneous, Not Vs. Greys [15 1/2]
Telescan-20, Instantaneous [5]
Telesend-20 [4]

Quirks

Favors most questions with blank stare [-1]
Never raises voice [-1]
Tends to lurk at back of any group [-1]
Mildly absent-minded [-1]
Watches Nolan with strange expression when he's not looking [-1]

Skills

Acting-20 [2]; Animal Handling-18 [1]; Anthropology-19 [2]; Area Knowledge (Earth)-22 [4]; Armoury (Hand Weapons)-18 [1/2]; Armoury (Rifles & Handguns)-18 [1/2]; Artificial Intelligence-18 [1]; Astronomy-18 [1]; Bard-18 [1/2]; Bicycling-15 [1/2]; Biochemistry-20 [8]; Boating-14 [1/2]; Botany-18 [1]; Bow-14 [1]; Boxing-16 [2]; Chemistry-19 [2]; Chess-20 [1]; Climbing-15 [1]; Computer Operation-19 [1/2]; Computer Programming-19 [2]; Crossbow-15 [1/2]; Dancing-14 [1/2]; Demolition-18 [1/2]; Diplomacy-20 [4]; Disguise-20 [2]; Driving (Automobile)-16 [2]; Driving (Tracked)-15 [1]; Ecology-19 [2]; Electronics (Computers)-23 [12]; Electronics Operation (Communication)-18 [1/2]; Electronics Operation (Medical)-18 [1/2]; Electronics Operation (Security Systems)-18 [1/2]; Electronics Operation (Sensors)-18 [1/2]; Engineer (Electrical)-18 [1]; Engineer (Mechanical)-18 [1]; Fencing-14 [1/2]; Gambling-18 [1/2]; Geology-20 [4]; Gunner (Machine Gun)-20 [8]*; Guns (Flamethrower)-17 [1/2]*; Guns (Pistol)-20 [4]*; Guns (Rifle)-19 [2]*; History-18 [1]; Judo-18 [16]; Karate-17 [8]; Knife-17 [2]; Leadership-18 [1/2]; Literature-18 [1]; Mathematics-19 [2]; Mechanic (Automobile)-18 [1/2]; Mechanic (Helicopter)-18 [1/2]; Metallurgy-17 [1/2]; Mind Block-21 [4]; Motorcycle (Medium and Heavy)-16 [1]; Naturalist-19 [2]; Orienteering-18 [1/2]; Parachuting-15 [1/2]; Paraphysics-20 [8]; Philosophy-18 [1]; Physician-18 [1]; Physics-20 [4]; Physiology-18 [2]; Physiology (Brainsucker)-17 [1]; Physiology (Grey)-18 [2]; Piloting (Helicopter)-15 [1]; Piloting (Light Airplane)-15 [1]; Poetry-19 [1]; Powerboat-14 [1/2]; Psychology-20 [4]; Psychology (Grey)-18 [1]; Research-20 [2]; Running-16 [4]; Savoir-Faire-19 [1/2]; Scuba-18 [1/2]; Shortsword-14 [1/2]; Sign Language (AMESLAN)-18 [1/2]; Skating-14 [1]; Skiing-14 [1]; Spear-14 [1/2]; Stealth-16 [2]; Streetwise-18 [1/2]; Swimming-15 [1/2]; Tactics-18 [1]; Teaching-24 [10]; Telegraphy-19 [1/2]; Throwing-14 [1]; Wrestling-15 [1]; Writing-18 [1/2]; Xenology-18 [1]; Zoology-18 [1]

* Includes +2 for IQ.

Languages

English-20 (native); German-19 [1]; Latin-19 [1]

Weapons

See ***Guns***.

Few of her fellow black ops really want to like Mia Mathers, but some feel they must - and others feel a little afraid to dislike her. As one of the Company's most powerful psis, Mathers holds a certain position of prestige. She cultivates this carefully. Despite her cold, humorless facade, she is a skilled negotiator and deals with others well. She just doesn't do it with warmth.

Regardless of her unique "project," Mia remains in active duty, and fills nearly her share of mission roles. As a science op and psi, she would be spending less time on missions and more time on research anyway, and she micromanages this time well to fill her more maternal responsibilities.

Her inability to read Grey thoughts limits Mia's use to the Company, and most of her offensive psi options vs. the aliens, but her overall competence counteracts this.

Assume she knows any of her TL-based skills at the TL appropriate for the campaign. That means that if she retains her TL8 firearms, she would take a -1 penalty with everyday TL7 firearms.

Medieval Moscow Blues: Designer's Notes for GURPS Russia

By S. John Ross

It was 1992, November, and the winter was an especially nasty one. Here in Virginia where I live, we had snow and sleet for days on end, hitting us in waves and piling up in layers three feet thick. The highways were scraped "clean" (the highway service have clearly expanded that term beyond my occasional experience with it), and the air was filled with blinding clouds of sparkling ice.

This I thought, *is* ***perfect.*** I had recently convinced SJ Games to let me create ***GURPS Russia,*** and the mood was exactly right to get started. I emerged from my apartment, bundled tight and snorting vapor, and headed for the library, an inch at a time. I only slipped once, and the thought of beginning my Russian journey kept me going. I was *roleplaying.* Go figure!

The Russians have many proverbs on the subject of fools; I was being proverbial. *Of course* the library would be closed. The rest of the *state* was closed. I stood there for a while in the snow, listening to it and pondering how long I had walked.

I decided that I wasn't going to waste the trip. I Cavorted. In the snow. I ran and jumped and belly-flopped down hills. I smashed into trees and threw snowballs at them. I shouted songs from *Fiddler on the Roof* at the top of my voice. ***GURPS Russia*** was to include complete rules for Advanced Combat and movement in nasty winter conditions, so Cavorting counted as *research.* As a bonus, the locals could peer out of their warm living-rooms and see a laughing fat guy slide by the window shouting for vodka.

That night created a mood that would stay with me throughout the following months, and in many ways it defined how the book "feels," in the end. Within a few weeks, I had the beginnings of the *real* research assembled, and my Russian journey was properly underway. I had my outline, a working knowledge of the Cyrillic alphabet, and a roadmap made up of five goals:

One: To design a ***GURPS*** worldbook for that fragment of history so frequently ignored in this century: the Russian Middle Ages, the Russia of swords and fire, of mad Tsars and treacherous Romanovs -- the Russia of Baba Yaga and her gruesome skull-lamps. What ***Vikings*** and ***Swashbucklers*** had done for the medieval Scandinavia and the Age of Sail, I intended to do for Holy Russia (*Fiddler on the Roof* is about a much later period, but the songs are cool).

Two: To describe Russia -- whenever possible and practical -- from the level of the soil, as the Russians knew it. I didn't want an outsider's standpoint, sketched through the filters of condescending Europeans, and I didn't want a sterile bird's-eye view of moving armies and shifting borders. I wanted a more complete picture.

Three: To convey something of what it means to *be* Russian, the elusive blend of mirth and misery, a sense of certain doom leavened with a love of family, of stories, of drinking and laughing and fighting and friendship. The "cultural character" of Russia was, from its very beginning, the product of tragedy upon tragedy. It was not ever, even for a little while, a *nice* place to live.

Four: To present Russian folklore with a sense of *theme,* not just as a list of monsters and spells and magic items. Russian fantasy isn't dungeon-crawls with furry hats and vodka; it's a portrait of Russian *fears.* On a friendly day, a

little hope creeps in (every story needs a victim). While I was at it, I *also* wanted a list of monsters and spells and magic items; that's in there, too.

Five: To blend these elements into an enjoyable *game-world,* a complete Russian environment ripe for adventure. Russia has unique and powerful advantages as a game-setting; it treads a narrow path hidden between the familiar themes of medieval Europe and the more alien lives of the Slavs and the Far East that influenced them. The first provides an accessible doorway to the latter, and I believe very strongly that this is one of the richest gaming environments ever explored. There's still a lot of territory to be mined for material, too.

Those goals gave the worldbook its form, and provided me with a lot of fuel to go on. Along the way, I discovered a number of fantastic things. The most intriguing was this: Medieval Russia, in terms of both history and folklore, isn't about Happy Endings. It's about taking heroism where you find it. It's also about facing adversity by getting friends together and laughing at it, which I found immensely appealing. I've always felt that one of the great virtues of our hobby is exactly that kind of attitude. Furthermore, I believe that role playing games are more effective, more memorable, when they *aren't nice.* Russia isn't nice.

I also discovered that medieval Russia was a playground for *modern* political ideologies. Because it would one day become a communist superpower, Russia's early centuries became the victim of savage re-writes, subtle revisions, long arguments, and thinly disguised personal agendas. Most people writing on the subject didn't really seem to *care* what life at the time was really like, or what concerns the people who lived there really had. To most historians, the medieval Russians weren't *people,* they were some kind of petri-dish microbes proving or disproving the validity of whatever social theory the historian had decided to feel passionate about. To bring Old Russia to life, I had to carve through more than just language barriers and dry primary sources, I had to carve through walls of deliberate *deception.*

The challenge was exhilarating and fraught with eyestrain. I wear glasses, now.

GURPS Russia presents the entire span of Russia's medieval period, from the Viking "Rus" of the 10th century to Ivan the Terrible and Peter the Great. As can be expected of any ***GURPS*** worldbook, it's chock-full of adventure seeds, maps, characters, settings, equipment, anecdotes, creatures, spells, advantages, and new rules, from character stats for Baba Yaga to (of course) Advanced Combat in ice and snow . . .

So go *use* them, already. Cavort!

INWO SubGenius Dirty Tricks

by Aaron Curtis

There are many illuminated and subtle ways to use the various cards available in ***INWO.*** Combinations that turn seemingly innocent cards into terribly effective weapons against your rivals. Clever uses of cards that can turn defeat into victory -- or at least survival until your next turn. Evil Schemes previously known only to the Secret Masters, now available to you!

The idea of collecting these Dirty Tricks in one place came from Dan Myers. His work can be found on the Web via the INWO Strategy Page, along with lots of other interesting ideas on how to build decks and win at ***INWO.*** Of course, these previous offerings only include cards from ***Assassins*** and the ***Basic Set,*** which brings us to . . .

INWO SubGenius Dirty Tricks! Hail "Bob"! All taken from the minds of those deviant, er, devious playtesters. Some are for use in ***INWO SubGenius*** stand-alone games, while others excel at putting Slack into your built-deck games.

1. S.L.A.K. Never Rests! They have the special ability to get a new action token on every player's turn, not just your own. There are numerous ways to turn this into a powerful weapon:

If you lead S.L.A.K. and don't go first, they get a token before your first turn! You can't use it to interfere with your rivals, but you can use it play Plots that require an action token. Best uses: S&L Scam to bring your plot hand up to five, or New Blood, Charismatic Leader or 13013 to bring their permanent power up to 6, just in time to make that first-turn attack to control that your rivals can't interfere with.

Now, S.L.A.K. with a power of 6 is a great defense, because you can use their token to defend against a rival's attack secure in the knowledge that you'll get it back at the start of the next player's turn. They can become a great offense, too, if you can give them Global Power via the Society of Assassins, Hidden Influence or Head Launching. Not only can they use that Global Power to defend any of your group, but they can interfere in any attack to control your rivals make! When they realize their first attack each turn will be at -6, they tend not to make these attacks anymore.

Warning: This tactic will make you as beloved as the I.R.S., and the first step in destroying a Power 6 S.L.A.K. is getting rid of that action token . . .

Of course, increasing S.L.A.K.'s power into the stratosphere with Cyborg Soldiers, the Necronomicon, NWO End of the World or controlling the Church of Middle America only increases the agony for your rivals.

A possible backup to S.L.A.K. is the Rogue SubGenii. You can give them an action token each turn, too, but it costs you a plot discard. The situation where this is actually better than S.L.A.K. is when you start someone's turn with a token on the Rogue SubGenii; if you spend their token (say, in defense) you can give them a second one immediately, while S.L.A.K. would have to wait until the next player's turn.

Rogue SubGenii and S.L.A.K. work well together, especially in an ***INWO SubGenius*** game with a common plot deck. Sam Kingston discovered this Dirty Trick: at the end of someone's turn, spend the tokens of both groups to draw a plot, then discard a useless plot to give the Rogue SubGenii their token back. On the next turn, S.L.A.K. gets their token back and you've exchanged a useless plot for a possibly useful one. You can keep doing this on every player's turn, recycling your plots and digging for gold until you've got a handful of plots that you wouldn't want to discard for an action token. Of course, cards like the Crystal Skull that give you plot control only make this more effective.

There are lots of other ways to make use of all those action tokens S.L.A.K. gets. For example, Ralph Melton suggests

linking the Nutrition Nazis to S.L.A.K. to make them Science and giving them the X-Ray Specs to allow you to look at the top three cards of any deck at the end of every player's turn! Other Dirty Tricks you'll have to discover for yourself . . .

2. Dr. K'taden Legume -- the ultimate protector! While you control him, all your other SubGenius Personalities are immune to attack! Naturally this makes him a target second only to Bjorne, but the right cards can keep him well protected . . . and by default, all your other SubGenius Personalities, too. For starters, you can bring his Power and Resistance up with Messiah, 13013, Commitment, and others. You can give him extra Action tokens (for defense) with the Martyr Meter or Local Clenches. You can protect him from harm with Immortality Serum, an Official, Divine, All-Inclusive Excuse, a Bodyguard or just put his Head in a Jar after the inevitable assassination attempts.

Of course, what would be *really* nice would be to prevent attacks altogether. This is not possible, but you can do a pretty good job with Connie Dobbs. Her puppets are immune to attacks to destroy, unless she loses her Straight alignment or SubGenius attribute. Even better, as long as she and Dr. Legume both remain SubGenius, his ability protects her! With this combo, discovered by Doug "Sirilyan" Sheppard, all you need to worry about are attacks to control Dr. Legume, and Mediocretinism.

A final note on Dr. K'Taden Legume: Under the control of the Secret FisTemple, every Personality is SubGenius, even Bjorne . . .

3. Rig the dice! Several cards give you powerful advantages, or not, depending on a die roll, such as Las Vegas, Suicide Squad and MWOWM. Combine these cards with the effect of The Janor Device, which lets you modify your own die rolls by 1 in your favor. The important advantage of the Device over other methods of die roll modification is that it can be used over and over at no cost! You will lose it eventually, however, because it goes to a rival (at random) whenever you roll a natural 11 or 12, "natural" meaning that if the dice show an 11 or 12, die roll modifications won't prevent the loss. There are two ways to deal with this. One is to hope that the new owner rolls a natural 11 or 12, losing it, and keep a Murphy's Law handy to modify your own die roll to a 12 when you and the other rivals dice off to see who gets it, bringing The Janor Device back to you. The other is to pack two copies of the Device in your group deck, and use Forgery to take it back if you ever lose it to a natural 11 or 12.

4. Get your rivals to help you! Bulldada and Tape Runs Out . . . can both be very effective at thwarting a rival at a critical moment. But, the cost of discarding three plots is often much too expensive, depending on what is in your hand. Instead, ask the other players to give you one "useless" plot each to pay for it. If it's important enough, they'll do it.

5. The Attacker That Will Not Die! There are several groups in ***INWO*** that cannot be destroyed, and therefore you cannot use Sucked Dry and Cast Aside on them. ***INWO SubGenius*** contains one group, the Xists, that can be destroyed, but instead of being discarded they go back into your hand. This is a perfect opportunity to boost their power to 20 for a single, deadly attack, after which you lose them from your power structure (hopefully you didn't give them any puppets), but not from your control, because you can bring them back with an automatic takeover on your next turn. This can be particularly effective when under a strong attack by your rivals, because it makes you appear further away from victory once they return to your hand, and therefore less likely that your rivals will continue the attack.

6. Get Slack! This one isn't a Dirty Trick, but is sure is a cool one. Jesus B.'s special ability costs one dollar (U.S., other countries use appropriate exchange rates). Pol Jackson was the first playtester to send in a dollar, and much to his surprise they sent him back a SubGenius catalog! If you save up several dollars' worth over the course of several games, you can send it in all at once and get some pretty interesting stuff from the Divine Mail Order. After all, as

long as you're paying for Slack, you might as well some Slack from it . . .

Survival of the Fittest: A Wilderness Adventure for *Shadowrun* by Stephen Kenson

Introduction

The runners are on a simple extraction run outside of the metroplex when a lucky shot from a corporate interceptor downs their helicopter in the wilderness of Salish Shidhe territory. The runners have to escape from the wreckage and make their way on foot back to civilization, avoiding corporate search parties and the hazards of the wilderness along the way while protecting their soft-skinned corporate charge. Once they reach something resembling "civilization" again, the runners discover that the wilderness may in fact be the gentler of the two jungles.

Minimal Complications

Tell It to Them Straight
Finally! A shadowrun where everything isn't a double-cross or a complete nightmare . . . so far. You've been hired to perform a simple corporate extraction from a facility belonging to the VisionCrafters corporation, a mid-level company specializing in cyber- and bioware eye replacements. The subject is one Dr. VanDeMeer, one of the company's best researchers, who is looking to acquire a more lucrative position with one of VisionCrafters' competitors.

The trip into Salish-Shidhe territory where the VisionCrafters lab is located went off without any problems, as did getting the good doctor out from under the watchful eye of his corporate masters. Everything came off smoothly. You made it back to the chopper where the pilot waited to take you back to Seattle and the nuyen you were promised for this job.

A few dozen klicks away from the facility is where the two Wasp helicopters picked you up and moved to intercept. The pilot started some evasive maneuvers when one of the choppers fired an anti-vehicle missile at you. You recall hearing the pilot yell something about holding on as the Hughes Stallion began to swerve to the side. The doctor cries out in fear, clutching his briefcase to his chest for dear life. Suddenly there is a shuddering impact and the chopper starts a dive toward the treetops.

You just knew this run was going too well.

Hooks
This scene puts the runners right into the action. Start off with the description of the run and go right into the helicopter crashing into the wilderness. Get the players' adrenaline pumping and don't give them a lot of time to think . . . they have to act quickly to keep their characters and their corporate charge alive and escape from their pursuers.

Behind the Scenes
There is nothing the runners can do to prevent the helicopter from crashing. The missile attack has badly damaged the craft and it is going down. The best they can hope for is to hold on to something solid and minimize any damage from the crash. The chopper is equipped with crash harnesses (which the runners should be wearing). Anyone not wearing a harness can get into one if the player states immediately that is what they are doing when the helicopter begins to dive.

Passengers wearing their crash harnesses must make Damage Resistance Tests against a Damage Code of 6M. Armor does not apply to this test, but they may use up to half their Combat Pool (round up) to represent proper crash

positioning and so forth. Anyone not wearing a crash harness must resist 10S damage. Dr. VanDeMeer will be wearing his crash harness and will somehow manage to come through it all unharmed save for a few bruises.

If the pilot of the Hughes Stallion is an NPC, he is killed in the crash. If a player-character would have been flying the helicopter, it is on loan from the runners' employer and the pilot must also make a damage resistance test as described above. Game Masters who wish to be especially cruel can have the helicopter that is shot down belong to one of the player-characters, but this is not recommended.

Once the bird is on the ground, there is an imminent danger of explosion from leaking fuel. The runners would be well-advised to get clear of the wreckage as soon as possible. The downed chopper explodes nicely once everyone is clear of it. The imminent danger of an explosion can be used to add tension to the runners getting out.

The back compartment of the Stallion has an emergency kit that contains: a standard medkit as on ***Shadowrun Second Edition,*** p. 250, a collapsible tent, some thin blankets, concentrated soy-food bars and a pair of small flashlights. Anyone who bothers to ask can find and take the kit with them.

Debugging
The main intention of this scene is to get the characters right into the meat of the adventure. The tests aren't intended to kill or even seriously harm the runners, although a couple of minor injuries can be an additional complication for them to deal with on their trek through the woods. Feel free to rig some of the damage tests to prevent any of the characters from punching out at this early juncture. There will be plenty of legitimate opportunities for that later in the adventure, anyway.

The Cabin

Tell It to Them Straight
You've been slogging through the sodden woods for hours now, careful to avoid pursuit and the searchers that you know are looking for you and, more importantly, for the pigeon you've got with you. The good doctor is having some trouble keeping up with you. He clutches his briefcase protectively and looks miserable in his soaked, torn and stained corporate suit. Seems like he might be reconsidering the wisdom of his decision to get a change of venue.

Through the dark foliage and rain you see a clearing ahead. There is an old cabin there. From the looks of it, the place has been abandoned for some years. The windows have dark, jagged holes in them and the wood shows considerable weathering, but the place looks pretty sturdy overall and would definitely beat spending the rest of the night out in the cold and rain.

Hooks
This scene is mostly intended to give the runners a short break to collect themselves and to foreshadow some of the upcoming scenes. The feeling is one of foreboding from the dark, abandoned cabin, but the runners don't have much of a choice about the matter unless they really want to stay outdoors.

Behind the Scenes
Once the runners leave the wreckage of their helicopter behind, they'll have to start walking to get back to civilization. They are not more than a kilometer from Puget Sound, in the woods in Salish Shidhe territory, Cascade Ork to be specific. It is nighttime and it is starting to rain heavily, which will continue throughout the night.

Unless one of the runners is specifically familiar with the area, they will have some difficult navigating and may even get lost if they are not careful. A Survival (Forest) or Navigation Test with a Target Number of 4 is sufficient to keep the runners on the right track. Those without these skills will have to default via the Skill Web (***SRII,*** p. 68). Guess ya should have stayed in the 'plex, huh, chummer?

The runners will also have the problems of food and water to deal with. The emergency kit from the chopper contains some concentrated soy food bars. They're flavorless and unpleasant, but adequate nourishment. There are eight bars, each equivalent to a meal (in terms of nutrition only). The runners could stretch them out over maybe a couple of days.

After that, they'll have to hunt. Finding fresh water could also be difficult. The gamemaster should call for Survival rolls for that as well.

A short time after the runners abandon their downed chopper, the VisionCrafters corporate security people discover the wreckage site. One of the pursuit helicopters radioed in the location. The corporation wants to recover Dr. VanDeMeer, and has sent out teams of searchers to find any survivors. The runners will hear signs of pursuit and the gamemaster should call for Stealth Tests for the runners to cover their tracks and keep under cover to avoid the sweeps of helicopters flying over the area in a search pattern.

Also, make a secret Perception (8) Test for all of the runners. If any succeed, they get the strong feeling of being watched and think they might have seen a flicker of movement out of the corner of their eye, but see nothing there when they turn to look.

If desired, the Game Master can also supplement the trip through the dark, rain-soaked woods with a few encounters with the local wildlife. Some of the following critters make the best choices to prey upon a group of wet and weary shadowrunners: aardwolves, barghests, a black annis, eyekillers, leshy, gabriel hounds or a piasma. Remember that unsuppressed gunshots and spectacular magic could give away the team's position to any nearby searchers.

Once the runners find the cabin, they get an opportunity to rest for a little while. They can even sleep for a time if they want. The cabin contains a fireplace, but lighting a fire would almost certainly give their position away to the corporate search teams, so smart runners will forgo that option. Dr. VanDeMeer will be grateful for the break and to be inside and will occasionally mutter under his breath what a bad idea it was to try and break his employment contract.

During the night, if the runners decide to sleep in the cabin, or while they are resting, make a secret Perception (10) Test for all of the runners present. Anyone who succeeds thinks they see a shadowy form looking in through one of the cabin's broken windows. If anyone goes to check, there is no sign of anyone there, but there is some water that has been dripped on the porch, as if someone had been standing there.

Debugging
If the runners decide to forgo resting in the cabin, that's their choice. Feel free to assess them additional target number penalties or some Mental (Fatigue) Damage from pushing themselves too hard. Dr. VanDeMeer will certainly speak up about stopping at the cabin to rest if none of the runners bother to and he will complain bitterly if the runners refuse his request.

If the players get too caught up in trying to figure out who the mysterious figure following them is, feel free to distract them by moving right into On the Run.

On the Run

Tell It to Them Straight
You hear a sound that catches your attention from the trancelike state of rest you had fallen into. There are a number of people moving through the woods toward this area, quite close by. The sudden hit of adrenaline brings you instantly awake and aware and ready to get going.

You set off on a run to get away from the area as quickly and quietly as possible and hope that the searchers won't know which direction to follow you in.

Hooks
This is a chase scene. Make the runners feel like their corporate pursuers are just a few steps behind them all of the time. Don't give them too much time to stand around and talk, but keep the action moving along quickly. This isn't a fight scene, that comes later in the adventure.

Behind the Scenes
Once the runners have been at the cabin for a little while, a corporate search team stumbles upon their position and

begins closing in, forcing the characters to run and try and lose them in the forest. The corporate team should arrive once the scene with the cabin is finished. This might be after the runners have rested there for a short while or immediately once they have decided not to take shelter in the cabin. In either case, the corps should show up to prevent the runners from having too much time to think about the nocturnal visitor they had in the last scene.

The corporate team consists of a half-dozen security personnel assisted by a company wage-mage (use the appropriate statistics from the ***Shadowrun*** rule book). If the team is not large enough to keep the team running, feel free to increase the number of security people, or exaggerate it for the runners' benefit (it's hard for them to tell how many pursuers there are in the woods).

The runners should make Stealth (6) Tests to make their way as quickly and quietly through the woods as they can. Athletics Tests might also be called for, to keep moving at a quick pace while not tripping over any fallen trees or protruding roots.

Unfortunately, Dr. VanDeMeer has no such skills. Only moments after the runners are out of sight of the cabin, the doctor trips over a root and goes sprawling in the mud. His briefcase strikes a nearby rock and pops open, spilling optical chips and paper printouts all over the ground. The doctor attempts to get up and gather his scattered belongings unless the runners do something to stop him. He complains about the loss of his research notes and materials if the runners do not allow him to recover them. If the runners decide to stop and gather the materials as quickly as possible, assume the corporate team stops to check out the cabin before immediately pursuing, but don't tell the runners that. Keep the tension high.

Once the runners are a short distance ahead of the corporate team and just starting to feel like they're going to get away, they come out of the woods to the edge of a narrow ravine that cuts through the area. The ravine is only about 8 meters across and perhaps twice that deep, with a rocky streambed at the bottom. There is a fallen tree across the ravine that could be used as a bridge to get across.

Any runner who thinks the fallen tree is too convenient is right. The tree fell from the edge of the ravine because the rain weakened the soil it was rooted in and that edge of the ravine is still loose. Any significant weight (like that of a person) placed on the tree will cause it to give way in 1D6 rounds and fall into the ravine. Anyone who falls will have to resist 15D falling damage (using Body plus Combat Pool and Impact Armor).

The runners can attempt to jump the ravine, but most will not be able to make an 8-meter jump, even with a running start. Magic might also be used to cross. Alternately, the characters can attempt to go around the ravine, since it doesn't appear to stretch too far in either direction. Whatever the decision, the runners need to make it quickly, because those corporate guards are right behind them.

Debugging
Give some fair warning about the dangers of different plans for crossing the ravine. Someone crossing the fallen tree when it starts to shift might be able to make an Athletics Test to jump to safety if you're feeling appropriately merciful.

If the runners lose one of their number at the ravine, that character could be captured by VisionCrafters and show up in the last scene of the adventure as a hostage. If the runners are caught by the corporates at the ravine, go on to the Predator section and have the bandersnatch attack the corp guards first to give the runners a chance to get away.

Predator

Tell It to Them Straight
You think you've finally lost those corporate searchers. The woods are still and quiet as you pause to catch your breath. Almost too quiet. You try and still your labored breathing to catch any of the other sounds of the woods, but you hear nothing. A faint kind of shimmer, like the heat from summer asphalt, catches your eye in the golden light slanting through the tree branches.

Hooks
This scene brings the runners face to muzzle with the mysterious hunter tracking them. The attack should be sudden and frightening as the runners try and contend with an opponent they can't see. Stress the chameleon-like powers of the bandersnatch and the confusion from the melee.

Behind the Scenes
Not long after the runners left their crash site they passed through the hunting grounds of a bandersnatch (***Paranormal Animals of North America,*** p. 22). The creature began silently stalking them, using its Adaptive Coloration power to make itself all but invisible to its prey. It came close to attacking the runners when they stopped at the cabin, but was frightened away when it heard the approach of the VisionCrafters security people. It has now chosen this moment to attack.

The bandersnatch will choose a runner who is lagging behind or who looks vulnerable and will attempt to attack from surprise. Unless the runner makes a successful Perception (10) Test, they are totally surprised by the creature's attack and gain no Combat Pool dice to resist it.

While the runners are in combat with the creature, they must make a Perception (8) Test each round in order to see the shifting outline of the bandersnatch as it moves. Even if they can see the creature, they suffer +2 to all ranged target numbers against it. The bandersnatch's invisibility affects themographic vision as well, but they can be spotted with astral perception. Keep in mind the +2 TN penalty for performing non-magical actions while using astral perception as well as the fact that the bandersnatch is a dual creature.

Bandersnatch

B	Q	S	C	I	W	R	E
8	3x4	7	-	2/4	4	4	(6)

Initiative: 4 + 3D6
Threat/Professional Rating: 5/3
Attacks: 4 dice, 8S damage, +1 Reach
Powers: Adaptive Coloration, Mimicry

If the runners manage to inflict a Serious Wound on the bandersnatch, it attempts to withdraw and seek out easier prey. When the fight begins, Dr. VanDeMeer will immediately attempt to hide and will be of little concern to the creature, although the Game Master can always threaten the good doctor's life to make the shadowrunners protect their investment in this run so far.

Debugging
The bandersnatch should give the runners a good fight if it is played intelligently and using all of its advantages. The biggest problem the runners face is the fact that they have to see the creature before they can hit it. That, coupled with the bandersnatch's considerable speed and strength, make it a formidable opponent.

If the runners are clearly able to magically overpower the bandersnatch, the gamemaster should keep in mind that the critter is dual-natured and can fight spells and spirits in astral combat. If this is not enough to counter the runners' magical muscle, make the bandersnatch a former sasquatch shaman before it was infected with the Human-Metahuman

Vampiric Virus. Although it is no longer intelligent enough to cast spells, it has enough unconscious use of its Sorcery skill to provide it with some spell defense (enough dice to offset the strongest magician in the runner group).

Civilization

Tell It to Them Straight

Civilization, at last, or at least something resembling it. You stumble to the outskirts of the small town nestled in the depths of tribal territory with a feeling of profound relief just to be out of the woods with all of the strange critters, dirt and rain.

The town is little more than a single main road with some buildings clustered along either side of it. There are a few side streets, some of them even paved, although most are just packed dirt that has become a morass of mud from all of the rain. There's a truck stop along the side of the road with several rigs parked next to it and a small coffin hotel oh-so cleverly named "the Pine Box," that probably caters to the truckers passing through town as well.

Hooks

This scene puts the runners back into their element - sort of. It produces a combination of relief at being back in a place inhabited by people with a bar and a place to crash, plus the concern over unfamiliar territory where the runners do not know who's who or who to trust.

Behind the Scenes

The runners have managed to stumble (intentionally or otherwise) upon the small town of Culverton in Cascade Ork territory. The town is mostly a truck stop and way-station for truckers making their way through tribal territory to Seattle and the other major metroplexes. It also serves as home to some of the people who work mining and logging operations in the area as well as the occasional smuggler taking goods to or from the Cascade Ork.

The town's population is entirely tribal and largely Ork and Troll, with a few Humans and Dwarfs mixed in for good measure. The runners don't see any Elves; any Elven members of their band draw some attention and dark stares from the townspeople. The runners get the feeling that Elves are not well loved here.

The major points of interest in Culverton are as follows:

The Pine Box

The Pine Box is a small coffin motel, two stories high with a total of 20 sleep cubicles. Most of them are presently unoccupied, and the runners should not have any trouble renting enough for their entire group if they wish. The manager is a bored-looking old Ork who spends most of his time in the motel's tiny office reading or watching a portable trideo. He has no real interest in the comings and goings of his customers.

Doc Running-Bear

If the runners are looking for someone to heal injuries, someone in town directs them to Doctor Running-Bear, the local healer. The doctor is a Ork shaman (Bear totem). Use the Ork Shaman archetype, ***Contacts Book,*** p. 24,for Doc Running-Bear, with Biotech 5, Diagnose 3, Heal 4, Antidote Serious Toxin 4 and other spells as the gamemaster sees fit. The doctor will patch up any of the runners to the best of his ability and charge them reasonable rates. As it happens, the doc has a side business doing some minor fixer-type work and is the best-connected person in Culverton. If the runners inquire about transportation back to Seattle, he will, for a fee of 500 nuyen, see about arranging something "discreet" to get the runners back to the metroplex.

The Truck Stop

The town's combination bar/truck stop is the central gathering place in Culverton. The patrons are all tribals and mostly Orks and Trolls, so the runners may get a few stares. There won't be any trouble as long as the strangers don't start any, but if the runners hassle the locals or look like they are spoiling for a fight, several of the bigger and tougher townies oblige them.

The truck stop is also where the runners can learn about Doc Running-Bear, either for his medical or other services.

Once the doc has agreed to find the runners some transportation, he sets up a meeting at the Truck Stop with an Ork rigger named Wild Willy, who is making a run to Seattle shortly (use the Rigger Archetype for Willy, but make him an Ork). He offers the runners space in his rig for the sum of 10,000 nuyen (which the runners can take out of the advance money they were paid for their run). The runners can negotiate with Willy, but they're in a bad position for it (+1 to their Negotiation Target Number). If the runners agree, Willy tells them to meet him at the Truck Stop the following night.

Debugging
The only major problem the runners are likely to run into is if they do something to seriously hack off the townies in Culverton. Such things as overt threats or violence will not earn them a warm welcome, and they could find themselves facing off against the townspeople as well as the VisionCrafters sec-forces in the final scene of the adventure.

The townspeople are tough frontier types, but they are not looking to get into a firefight with a bunch of shadowrunners. They play things smart and try and do what is likely to get the fewest people hurt. The runners are going to have some serious difficulty getting out of tribal territory without any help, so the gamemaster might want to remind players having a bout of mega-violence about that.

Going Somewhere?

Tell It to Them Straight
You are glad to spend a night sleeping indoors on a real bed, even if it is just a temprafoam cushion on the floor of a coffin cubicle. Having the day to rest and recover seems to have improved Dr. VanDeMeer's disposition as well. You've all seen about enough of the scenic Salish Shidhe lands as you care to and you're actually looking forward to the grime and rat-race of the metroplex again.

Willy's waiting for you at the Truck Stop when you arrive. He tells you everything is all set to go. His rig is outside and you can get going. You follow the rigger out and a squatter just outside the door looks up at you.

"Got any spare change?" he asks and you start to feel like you're back home already when the squatter stands up and drops the masking spell concealing her real features. The corporate mage gives you a nasty smile as a collection of goons appear out of the nooks and crannies around the Truck Stop and train their guns on you, the faint red of the laser sights visible in the twilight. The VisionCrafters logo is clearly visible on their body armor.

"Going somewhere?" she asks.

Hooks
This is the big wrap-up scene that ends in a classical shoot-out in the middle of Culverton. The runners get to vent their frustrations on the corporate guards who have been chasing them all this time, then clear out and get back to the metroplex without fear of being followed. What could be better? Make the scene fast and furious.

Behind the Scenes
The VisionCrafters team managed to track the runners to Culverton eventually (possibly with the help of clues the runners may have left behind). Instead of rushing into the town, guns blazing, they decided to lay a trap for the runners so they could take them more easily. Once the trap is sprung, Monica Dane (the mage and leader of the team) will politely request that the runners surrender and hand over Dr. VanDeMeer. The VisionCrafters operatives have the runners covered (the gamemaster may wish to use the new Covering rule given at the end of the adventure) and it will be difficult, but not impossible, for the characters to take them in a fight.

Unless the runners want to disappear into corporate territory never to be seen again, they need to fight or trick their way past the VisionCrafters team. The Game Master needs to judge the effectiveness of any trick or bluff the runners might use. Keep in mind that Monica Dane is no fool and a capable mage to boot. Her men are likewise trained professionals, something as simple as "wow, look at that!" isn't going to fool them.

If it comes down to a shootout, the corporates fight intelligently for as long as they look able to win. If the runners start completely trouncing them, they withdraw. During the fight the corp guards make use of available cover and Monica coordinates her spells to aid her men.

Monica Dane (Combat Mage)

B	Q	S	C	I	W	R	E	M
2(4)	4	2	2	5	5	4	6	6

Initiative: 4 + 1D6
Threat/Professional Rating: 5/3
Skills: Conjuring 4, Etiquette (Corp) 2, Firearms 3, Magical Theory 4, Sorcery 6, Unarmed Combat 3
Gear: Armor Jacket (5/3), HK227 [SMG, 28 (clip), SA/BF/FA, 7M], silver and copper necklace [Power Focus 2], spell lock [Armor, 2 successes], spell lock [Personal Combat Sense, 4 successes]
Spells: Manabolt 5, Power Bolt 4, Clairvoyance 3, Personal Combat Sense 5, Heal 3, Mask 4, Armor 3, Confusion 3

VisionCrafters Company Men (5)

B	S	Q	C	I	W	R	E
4	4	4	3	4	4	4.95	4(5)

Initiative: 5 +2D6
Threat/Professional Rating: 3/3
Skills: Armed Combat 4, Car 3, Etiquette (Corporate) 2, Firearms 5, Unarmed Combat 5
Cyberware: Cybereyes with Low Light and Thermographic, Radio
Gear: Browning Max-Power [Heavy Pistol, 10 (clip), SA, 9M], HK227 [SMG, 28 (clip), SA/BF/FA, 7M], Armor Jacket (5/3)

Debugging
If the runners decide to give up without a fight, make it clear to them that VisionCrafters, like most corporations in the Sixth World, does not look kindly upon shadowrunners and is likely to simply have them killed once they have recovered Dr. VanDeMeer. They might allow themselves to be captured in the hopes of breaking out at a more opportune time. The Game Master needs to develop this scene if the runners take that option.

If the runners are getting annihilated by the corporate team, give them some help in the form of a well-placed shot from Wild Willy or spell from Doc Running-Bear to even the odds. Likewise, if the runners are mowing through the corporate guards, feel free to up their Threat level or have some reinforcements show up.

Picking Up the Pieces

After the runners deal with the VisionCrafters squad in Culverton, they have no trouble getting back to Seattle with the doctor and turning him over to their principal. Their Mr. Johnson is a little peeved about the lateness of their arrival, but pleased if the runners deliver the doctor in good condition, ready to serve his new employers. He pays the runners the agreed-upon sum of 10,000 nuyen each for the run and sends them on their way with assurances that he will keep them in mind for future opportunities.

The runners might find Wild Willy a useful contact for runs across the Salish-Shidhe Council border and Doc Running-Bear handy to know for making "arrangements" in tribal territory. They may also have picked up an enemy in the VisionCrafters corporation, especially if Monica Dane survived their final encounter in Culverton. The corporation won't pursue any overt action against the runners, but it could still make trouble for them in the future.

Awarding Karma

Award team Karma for the adventure as listed below. Award individual Karma according to the standard rules (***SRII***, p. 199).

Survival - 1 point.

Threat - 1 point.

Overcoming the Bandersnatch - 1 point.

Bringing the doctor back alive - 1 point.

Covering (new Rule)

If a character attempts to "cover" someone with a gun to keep them from moving or acting, use the following guidelines. The covering character makes a normal Firearms Test against the target, modified for range and other conditions, but the covering character does not fire. The target makes a Combat Pool Test against the covering character's Firearms Skill. If the covering character wins, the target is "covered."

At any time thereafter, the covering character can shoot the covered character with the number of successes scored on the Covering Test and the covered character may only roll Body dice to resist the attack. This occurs regardless of Initiative. In effect, the covering character has a held action to use against the covered character for as long as they remain "covered."

A covered character can attempt to distract the covering character in order to break the covering. If an attempt is made, the two characters make an opposed Reaction Test. If the covered character wins, Initiative is rolled normally. If the covering character wins, the covering remains and the covered character likely gets shot.

Very fast characters have a far better chance of breaking out of being covered by someone if they can distract them for even an instant. Slower characters can still do so, provided their opponent isn't a lot faster than they are.

VisionCrafters - Qualitycybereyes - in about an hour

Main Headquarters:
Vancouver, Salish Shidhe Council
The VisionCrafters corporation is pretty small by the standards of the multi-trillion nuyen megacorps, but is still a large enough corporation to make life for a shadowrunner interesting in more ways than one.

In truth, the way that VisionCrafters most often becomes involved with shadowrunners is internally - inside the shadowrunners, that is. The corporation is a top producer of cybernetic and genetically engineered eye replacements and optics of all different kinds.

Their replacement eyes and eye-modification clinics are well represented throughout the world. They range from the very expensive to the minor medical and fashion modifications offered at mallplexes the world over.

VisionCrafters offers standard cybereye replacements as well as slightly more expensive bio-engineered models. They also produce cybereye cameras and data-display links, and have recently begun selling cybereyes with specialized miniature weapons, such as dart guns and microlasers.

Although Vision-Crafter's main line of business continues to be cybereyes and bio-genetic replacements, they are diversified into all sorts of different optics fields, including lasers, optical communications and data transfer.

Thanks to Lyle Hinckley for the inspiration for this adventure (and all of the Serious wounds that came with it!)

A Near Future Roleplaying Campaign by Stephen Kenson

The year is 2015, and humankind does not seem to have changed much. Despite the warnings of apocalyptic cults and doom-sayers about the turn of the Millennium, the world is much as it has always been. Or so it seems. But there is an evolutionary destiny stirring in the minds of humanity, a genetic birthright that some extraordinary individuals are now beginning to discover, powers of the mind that were once only the stuff of legend and speculation.

And in the distant reaches of space other minds are watching with interest to discover how humanity will deal with this birthright and are waiting to judge the results. The future of humanity hangs in the balance . . .

The Unity

The Unity is the name of an interstellar civilization that has existed in and around Earth's "neighborhood" of the Milky Way galaxy for the past several centuries. It is composed of at least a dozen member races from various planets in a space at least 1,000 light years in diameter.

The Unity's civilization and technology is based on the use of psionics. All of the member races of the Unity are psionic and have channeled their science and industry into psi-tech that influences all aspects of their society. Communications are handled telepathically and instantly, even over interstellar distances. Medicine is strongly focused on psychic healing, and life-extension techniques allow members of the Unity races to life very long lives indeed, usually measured in centuries. Even their star-drives are psionically based "jump drives" that allow ships to teleport across vast interstellar distances with the aid of a psionic navigator.

Their sophisticated technology and telepathic society has given the Unity a very developed and peaceful culture. Crime is almost nonexistent and the races of the Unity hold up the fact that their highly empathic natures make them reluctant to harm other creatures. The few non-psionic races known to them are no threat to the Unity because the telepathic "world minds" they are capable of forming can overcome any invasion force in an instant.

The Unity is founded on the belief that all intelligent races have the capacity to evolve psionic abilities and that psi is the ultimate expression of a "higher-stage" of evolutionary development. Eventually, life will develop into a state of pure thought, without the need for physical form. The member races have a tradition of "stewardship" towards the non-psionic races they encounter, patiently awaiting the day when they too will develop psi and be welcomed into the ranks of the universal mind.

While such a primitive race is developing, the Unity has a strict non-intervention policy, lest they interfere with the race's natural process of development. The Unity has known about Earth for centuries, but they have carefully done nothing more than observe and keep tabs on human progress, mostly psionically from a great distance without anyone the wiser.

For gamemasters using ***GURPS Space*****,** the Unity can be described with the following information:

Overall Tech Level: 10 to 11

STL Travel: TL10

Reactionless drive FTL Travel: Psionic jump-drive. The Unity has not investigated other means of interstellar travel and it is quite possible that there is no other means.

FTL Speed: Instantaneous across up to 3 parsecs. Some rarer ships have greater "speed" and can cover several times that distance in a single jump.

FTL Range: Virtually unlimited because the drive requires no fuel, only the power of a psi-navigator to guide it.

FTL Navigation: Simple straight-line, point-to-point transfer. Navigation does require psionic abilities to carry out, but this is not a problem for Unity personnel.

FTL Anomalies: None known at this time.

Power: TL11 Fusion and Antimatter.

FTL Radio: None, but Unity psi-tech does permit telepathic communication over interstellar distances with no lag-time. This requires fairly bulky booster equipment and amplifiers that can only be found in a ship or installation; they are not easily portable.

Habitable Worlds: Perhaps 60 or so within the bounds of the Unity, with new colony worlds being discovered and explored at a rate of one or two a year.

Sensors: TL10 and very accurate. Often augmented by psionic gestalts using Telepathy, ESP and Astral Projection.

Weapons: Heavy reliance on psionic-enhancement technology to create powerful gestalts for planetary defense. Ships carry light defensive weaponry as well, usually sophisticated particle beams.

Computers: Psionic AIs are fairly common, but psiborg technology using living tissue is strictly prohibited.

Medical: TL10 with strong reliance on physicians with psionic Healing skills as well as citizens' inherent healing abilities. Life Extension use fairly commonplace.

Aliens: At least a dozen known races. Member races are all psionic. The Kyz and the Meeranon (from ***GURPS IST***) as well as any of the psionic races from ***GURPS Aliens*** would be suitable members.

Government: Participatory democracy conducted through telepathic means such as world-webs and gestalts.

Psionics

According to the Unity, psionic ability lies latent in all intelligent races and the emergence of psi-powers is a sign that the race has reached a significant evolutionary plateau and is ready to join the greater brotherhood of species in interstellar civilization. There is no certainty as yet that this theory is true, but the Unity operates as if it is and, thus far, they seem to have been right.

Humanity, at the very least, does appear to be an emerging psionic species and has been for the last few thousand years of human history. Sporadic manifestations of latent psi abilities have laid the foundations for many human myths and religions, but only recently have human psionic abilities and the understanding of them begun to reach any level resembling that which the Unity considers acceptable for an "emerging" psionic race.

Psi abilities appear together in races that develop them. The races of the Unity all possess all of the different psionic powers. Although some races and individuals may be better at some abilities than others, they lie latent in everyone.

This means all humans have a base 1 level in all the psi powers from ***GURPS Psionics***, except for Antipsi (30 points). For the vast majority of people these powers are both Unconscious and Uncontrollable (a total -50% Limitation to each Power). This "latent psi package" costs 19 points, but is automatic for all humans, so it is recommended that the gamemaster add 19 points to the starting point-level to pay for these abilities. These latent psi abilities are the reason for normal human flashes of insight, empathy, intuition and deja vu that occur for everyone.

Some rare humans have higher natural levels of psionic ability, giving them stronger "gut feelings" and sometimes phenomenal "luck" and even highly erratic paranormal abilities. Many such abilities have played roles in human history, with stories of gifted human psis being turned into legends, myths and fairy tales.

Some even rarer individuals have begun to break through the limitations placed on human psionic powers and develop full-blown psi powers and skills they can consciously control. These people are the first generation of what the Unity believes is humanity's next step in evolution to assume their status as fellow enlightened beings. It only remains to be seen if the humans will survive the birth pangs of their new race and become a full-fledged psionic species, ready for membership in the Unity.

One of the greatest difficulties is the fact that - despite the propaganda of the Unity - psionic ability does not automatically confer superior moral status, and psis are just as capable of abusing the power they are given as anyone. The determining factor will be not only how humans greet the new psis among them, but how the emerging psionic population uses their powers. If it appears that humanity is a threat to them, the Unity will have no choice but to take action against Earth. It is something they have done in the past, and will do again if it is necessary to protect their society. Humanity has no idea that their fate is being judged from afar and even the Unity is not aware that they are not the only players on the field.

The Hive

There is one alien civilization that the Unity is unaware of: a complex hive-mind species of microscopic organisms. They are telepathic, and capable of affecting and reading other beings, but their own minds are so alien and strange that human and Unity telepaths have great difficulty connecting with them.

The Hive comes from space, in the form of a kind of "egg" - a protein/DNA soup held in a protective shell strong enough to enter a planet's atmosphere and reach the surface.

There the "mother shell" telepathically attracts local life forms and the alien fluid from the egg attempts to invade them to place the Hive DNA within their structure. The actual Hive lifeforms are colonies of viruses that develop within the planetary lifeform's biosystem and eventually take control of it.

Using captured lifeforms, the Hive spreads and begins to infiltrate other lifeforms, usually by spreading through the food chain until it reaches the dominant lifeform on the planet. There is at least one world in the Unity's sphere of influence infested with the Hive but, since the planet harbors only primitive life (that the Unity is aware of) they have left it alone.

The Hive has hidden from the Unity's telepathic probes, but are now aware of them. How-ever, the Unity has escaped infiltration because of their non-interference policy and the sophisticated planetary defense systems of their homeworlds.

The Hive has come to Earth to pursue two goals. First, they will be able to take control of an emerging psionic species, gaining the human powers and abilities with which to augment their own. Secondly, if they can mask their presence

from the Unity until humans are accepted into Unity, they will be able to infiltrate that society as well. The Hive wants Earth to join the Unity, but for reasons of their own.

In ***GURPS*** terms, a colony of Hive lifeforms that infest a living creature has human level IQ and Telepathy Power 8 with various telepathic skills. They can also use the psionic skills and abilities of their host, if any, and augment the host's Telepathy power with their own (treat this as forming a gestalt).

Earth

Unaware of the plans of either the Unity or the Hive, Earth continues on its shaky course. The 21st century is not as dark a future as some have painted it, but it does have its problems. Humanity is facing burgeoning population, pollution, environmental devastation and political unrest. There has been progress, but everything seems like trying to scoop water with a sieve, and every advance only seems to delay the inevitable. Visionaries and futurists say that humanity's only hope is to be able to leave the confinement of a single environment to have room to expand or else suffocate in its own wastes. Humanity has to leave Earth.

This had led to increasing interest in space research, and the more developed nations are pursing more aggressive space-programs once again. Satellites and space stations are fairly routine and plans are underway for the construction of a mass-driver launch system for sending up payloads to construct permanent orbital habitats and, eventually, colonize Luna.

There is also a strong conservationist movement to take care of what is left of the environment. Oceanic cities are being constructed that "mine" the deep ocean depths for thermal-differential power and produce vast amounts of algae-based food protein and other aquacultured products. Initiatives to clean up the air and water are being pursued and enforced, and an international edict ending the destruction of the Amazon rain forest is in effect and the signees are working to replant.

Despite these advances, disease is rampant, with higher populations leading to greater incidence of new infection and mutation. Viruses like HIV-III are still spreading rapidly, making some areas of the world paranoid, isolated behind sterile barriers to keep out any chance of contagion. Travel is slowed by extensive medical checks for any new disease carriers. These safeguards have slowed the spread of the Hive through the human population and forced them to be selective in who is infected, lest they be detected by human authorities too soon.

Population has also continued to increase at an alarming rate, despite the die-offs caused by plague outbreaks. Cities are all overcrowded, noisy and crime-ridden, with the close quarters often leading to violent tempers, riots and civil unrest. Many urban areas have adopted elaborate social codes of politeness modeled loosely on the Japanese customs for handling such overcrowding and lack of personal space.

Interconnectivity has increased as well, with the Internet becoming a more mature, worldwide technology. Telecommuting is routine, and more than half the workers in the world use it to get their jobs done. Internet connections are as common as television and telephones in most homes, indeed, they are part of the Integrated Services Digital Network that combines television, telephone and other such media.

Home computers are sophisticated integrated systems for data- and media-management that also handle many of the basic housekeeping tasks like controlling lights and air conditioning (to conserve power). Most computers accept simple voice commands, but direct input through a keypad or similar device is still the standard. Virtual reality controllers using light gloves and goggles are very popular for the well-off, about as common as home computers are today.

Most "cyberpunk" technology hasn't really happened. There is very little in the way of bionics, save for more sophisticated artificial limbs for medical use. Neural interface is still just a distant dream and there are no legions of computer hackers making away with the world's valuable data (or at least they're so good that nobody has ever detected them).

The cities are more dangerous than they used to be, and many better-off areas have resorted to neighborhood watches and tenant commissions hiring their own private security. Most areas are not lawless, however, and riots and violent crimes are put down by the authorities.

Most of the world's major political entities are still in power and struggling to remain that way. Europe continues to limp towards unification, with more stumbling blocks appearing every day. It does have a common currency and few, if any, trade barriers. It also shares a common bureaucracy.

Russia has begun to recover from the fall of the Soviet Union and is working to turn itself into a major agricultural producer for the rest of the world. China has taken prominence in the world economy through the "gateway" city of Hong Kong, which now acts as China's "silent partner" in boosting its economy to deal with the crushing internal pressures of overpopulation and civil unrest.

The United States has remained the doddering old uncle of the family of nations, nodding off in the rocker with a shotgun cradled across his lap. Every once in a while, U.S. military forces remind everyone how capable they are, but for the most part the U.S. has given up on "policing the world" and has tried to turn its attention toward domestic matters.

Japan is sliding down the slope of economic depression, losing ground to the mini-dragons of the Far East like Taiwan and Korea, with the dark shadow of China backing them up. Japanese overpopulation has made Japan one of the major nations for the development of oceanic cities, which may have a chance of revitalizing its economy once again.

Elsewhere in the world things are much the same. Third-world nations are quickly becoming information-savvy and skipping over the Industrial Nation stage right into the information age with cellular networks and ISDN connections to rival the best in the world. In many parts of the world, life continues just as it has for millennia, unaware of the changes going on elsewhere.

The governments of the world do have one issue that they agree upon. Something strange is happening to some of their people. None of them are entirely sure what it is, but they know that it disturbs them.

The Campaign

The Unity War campaign works best if the players (and their characters) start out completely clueless about the vastness of the issues facing them. An ordinary, low-tech cyberpunk campaign set in the near-future is a good place to get started. The player characters could be anyone, not necessarily hard-bitten mercenaries, but businesspeople, telecommuters, oceanic colonists, street people, anyone from any walk of life, just trying to make it in the world. The Game Master should start with a scenario that lets all of the player characters work together from the start: co-workers, members of the same gang, part of the same colony or even members of the same extended family.

As things get going, the adventurers start to discover they can Do Things - just simple flashes of uncanny insight and intuition at first, but eventually major phys-

ical psionic phenomena such as psychokinesis and even teleportation. They are part of the first generation of fully realized psionics in the human race. There are others of their kind emerging all over the world; perhaps one person in 10,000 is starting to develop some kind of active psionic ability, and some of those psis are potentially quite powerful.

How will the protagonists react to these abilities? How will they use them? Once they realize what is going on, the governments of the world will scramble to get control of psionics, as will major corporation and other interest groups. Will the newly awakened psionics join up with one of them or strike out on their own? They could form the core of a new psionic strike force for the U.S. government, a military psi-corps or even a secret "thought police." If they refuse to join up, how will the government react? Perhaps mildly at first, or perhaps by jailing or executing rogue psis to eliminate the danger they represent. Will the new psis turn against their own kind and hunt down rogues for their employers or turn rogue themselves?

Once the party has begun to settle into things being different in the world, with a sizable psionic population emerging and them at the forefront of it in one way or another, they discover something else entirely. Strange Things are going on within their organization and elsewhere. Very subtle patterns are developing, and possible covert telepathic communications have been detected, but the psi who reported them died in some mysterious "accident."

Following this trail of strange happenings, they discover the presence of the Hive, which they may take to be some kind of psionic conspiracy at first before they discover the microscopic aliens behind it all. And when they do, how will they know who has been co-opted by the Hive and who hasn't? Can they trust anyone in their organization any longer? What happens when a Unity observer decides to break his oath of non-interference by sending covert telepathic messages to certain Earth-people to tell them the truth about the Unity and its observations of their world? The messages can potentially manifest as dreams, subconscious impulses or simply disembodied voices.

As the campaign progresses, the adventurers become more and more aware of the larger issues that they are dealing with, until they discover that their world and the human race are caught in the conflict between the Unity and the Hive. What if the Unity decides to "cleanse" the Earth of the Hive infestation by sterilizing the entire planet for the overall good of interstellar civilization? What if the Hive makes the Unity out to be the bad guys and promises to protect the Earth and humanity from them?

Get the players started and wish them luck.