

# PYRAMID

Issue 3/62 December '13

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# TRANSHUMAN SPACE II

## THREE OFFICES, PORT LOWELL

**WE ARE THE 9.9%**  
by Jason "PK" Levine

by Phil Masters

**ELOI GAMES**  
by William H. Stoddard

**INDENTURES INC.**  
by J. Edward Tremlett

**WEAPONS AND UNITS OF  
THE HONDURAN CIVIL WAR**  
by David L. Pulver

# STEVE JACKSON GAMES

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Sometimes, tomorrow can't get here fast enough. We at *Pyramid* sympathize, and we're doing what we can to bring the future to you like never before, with another installment devoted to *Transhuman Space* (but no doubt containing material of interest to many near-future worlds).

We begin with a feature that's out of this world – literally! *Three Offices, Port Lowell* – written by *Transhuman Space* Line Editor Phil Masters – tours key locales in the Martian city of Port Lowell. With a look at how European, American, and corporate interests have each staked a claim on the Red Planet, offworld heroes are sure to find adventure and intrigue.

For adventure possibilities that are more “down to Earth,” *GURPS* Assistant Line Editor Jason “PK” Levine (*GURPS Monster Hunters* and others) builds off the foundation of *Transhuman Space: Broken Dreams* by presenting a batch of ready-to-use 100-point *GURPS* templates that let the players quickly start anywhere they're willing to buck the system. Use these guidelines to introduce new players to the most significant aspects of the *Transhuman Space* setting.

When an impoverished Third Wave nation (or a rich mercenary group!) must go to war, it can get military inspiration from the *Weapons and Units of the Honduran Civil War*. This month's Eidetic Memory offering from David L. Pulver, the creator of the *Transhuman Space* setting, includes two types of drones, a massive six-ton tracked cybershell vehicle, and more – all ready to kill with *GURPS* stats.

Are you willing to give up a few years in exchange for a pile of money? For many people, that's the Platonic ideal of “working,” but *Indentures Inc.* takes the concept even farther. Get an implant, do something menial, have the memory wiped, and get paid – what could go wrong? The description of the titular organization also includes a number of adventure seeds that – yes – show what could go wrong.

Some folks like to start small and work their way up. Others prefer to be ridiculously rich and powerful. *Eloi Games* looks at those who are in the upper echelons of society, and what they do to bring meaning to their lives. Written by William H. Stoddard (*Transhuman Mysteries*), this guide to the ultra-powerful can be the focal point of a series of adventures, or a useful addition to other campaigns that need insight into those who own the world.

Whether you're experiencing this *Pyramid* as a printout, screen-read file, or digital image poured directly into your brain, you're sure to discover something exciting. The future is here, and it's ready to be read!

### Article Colors

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

- Pale Blue:* In This Issue
- Brown:* In Every Issue (letters, humor, editorial, etc.)
- Dark Blue:* *GURPS* Features
- Purple:* Systemless Features

**COVER ART**  
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# FROM THE EDITOR

## RETURN TO TOMORROW!

When looking at a science-fiction world, there are two broad ways most commonly used to introduce readers/watchers/gamers to the experience. The first is a top-down approach: “It is a time of civil war” or “in the grim future of . . .”; then you zoom down. The second is a bottom-up approach: “Here is what the situation is for these specific heroes; let’s see how they get embroiled into the larger whole.” (Many works – such as *Star Wars: A New Hope* – do both in short order.)

*Transhuman Space* works well in either configuration. You can either start by giving the players a broad overview of the current global situation – “It’s shiny and optimistic, except where it isn’t!” – or start in with a specific circumstance for a group of protagonists and lay out the world for them, such as Phil Masters’ *Personnel Files* series.

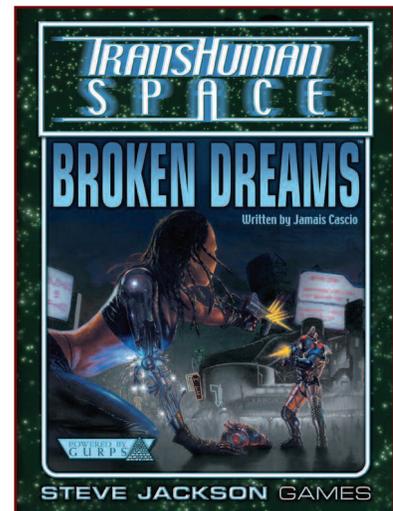
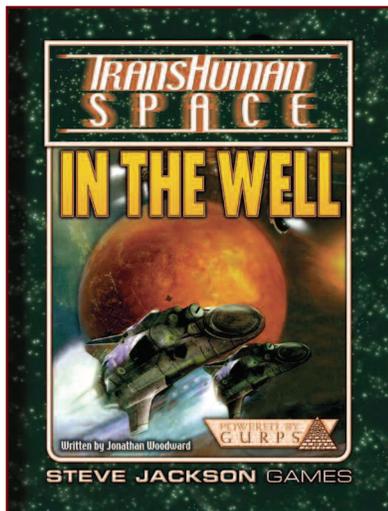
Many *Transhuman Space* supplements need to take a higher-level approach by nature of their topics; it’s hard to look at crime and detection (*Transhuman Mysteries*) or interpersonal combat (*Martial Arts 2100*) without understanding the big picture. *Pyramid* is intimate enough that we can look at

smaller corners of the universe – such as *Three Offices, Port Lovell* (pp. 4-11), *We Are the 9.9%* (pp. 12-16), and David L. Pulver’s details of the Honduran Civil War (pp. 18-22) – and hopefully inspire a new angle for heroes to begin or investigate. However, we don’t shy away from the “big picture” either, and this *Pyramid* includes a fair bit that’s enough to wrap a number of exciting campaigns around: *Eloi Games* opens up broad new avenues for the entire world focus to shift, while *Indentures Inc.* adds an intriguing new option for creative GMs.

Whether you work from the top down or bottom up, the future is waiting for you to build it – and *Pyramid* is happy to provide you with the tools.

## WRITE HERE, WRITE NOW

Until we perfect AIs to tell us what we’re doing right and wrong, we need *you* to fill this vital role! How are you using this material in your campaign? What do you wish we’d write about? Let the Architects of Tomorrow know via private feedback at [pyramid@sjgames.com](mailto:pyramid@sjgames.com), or join the ultra-tech virtual meeting place at [forums.sjgames.com](http://forums.sjgames.com).



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# THREE OFFICES, PORT LOWELL

BY PHIL MASTERS

The city of Port Lowell, on Mars, is detailed in *Transhuman Space: In the Well* (p. 23). In brief, it's an American-founded town, but even more significantly, it's a *corporate* town, created to provide somewhere for businesses and governments to set up shop – specifically including non-American businesses and governments. It has succeeded in this aim without ever becoming stylish or glamorous.

It's very much a “business town,” where nearly everything is privately owned, and even law enforcement is provided by individual security companies. However, because practically everyone living there is a corporate or government employee,

and because those tenant organizations recognize that it's in their interest to keep their employees tolerably safe, few people go unprotected. It's not entirely a bad place to live, if you like noisy bars full of corporate drones, engineers, and junior diplomats letting off steam.

In game terms, Port Lowell is a pretty good place to run adventures, and an even better place to *start* them. Protagonists may be employees of tenant organizations. Perhaps they are some kind of troubleshooters or other support staff based at their HQs there but likely to travel all over Mars. Or they might be freelancers, doing much the same for multiple organizations – many of whom happen to be based in Port Lowell. Or they might be visitors, holding meetings in this melting-pot town with people who prefer not to work over the Web, or seeking particular physical purchases in a place where almost anything can be bought and sold.

The town's peculiar law-enforcement situation also offers countless scenario possibilities. With multiple security companies operating across multiple jurisdictions, a change in physical position of a few yards can make the difference between whether something was legal or illegal, who has the need or the right to investigate it, and whether the entities responsible are legally people or not. Protagonists may be security company staff, private investigators, or interested parties with reasons to insist that they should join in some investigation.

Three important organizations with offices in the town merit a closer look. They offer opportunities for employment, and showcase some scenario possibilities.

## THE U.S. MARSHAL'S OFFICE

Port Lowell law enforcement may mostly be overseen by the Mars Development Corporation and the various security companies, and the town may not officially be part of the U.S. colony, but that doesn't mean that the Commonwealth – or the government back on Earth – can let things be reduced entirely to private vigilantism and corporate goons. The town territory – outside of private buildings, at least – is claimed as the property of an American corporation, as too are many of those buildings, so the government cannot entirely disown it; all else aside, China would doubtless present that as irresponsibility, and possibly even try to muscle into the area.

## Wealth on Mars

*Transhuman Space* games need a defined “local Wealth level” to fit with the rules in *Transhuman Space: Changing Times* (pp. 36-37). For these purposes, Mars is a “Comfortable” area. However, as with other off-Earth settings, a lot of the cost of living for any given Status level on Mars necessarily goes toward essential life support, terraforming fees, etc., making actual Martian lifestyles seem rather spartan and rugged by Earth standards – though quite comfortable by earlier historical terms!

Despite all that, many people on Mars have personal Wealth levels which are merely Average; they work unusually long hours by normal 2100 standards to maintain their Status (typically 30 hours a week for Status 0 – more if they are ambitious or want to save money). Even so, they don't object because they see themselves as pioneers building a new world. Those with higher Wealth are often specialists or experts who have shipped out from Earth on temporary contracts, and work those same hours in order to accumulate a lot of money. Such “temporary Martians” typically plan to go home rich and take a few years off, or even retire young. Both types can be encountered around Port Lowell.

Similarly, some of the 80% of personal wealth that is tied up in fixed assets for a “settled” person can, on Mars, be assumed to be spent on what would elsewhere count as specialist survival gear – breathing masks, protective biotech or nanotech treatments, etc. Indeed, where someone on Earth would have ordinary winter clothes as part of their starting wardrobe, an inhabitant of Mars might have a thermo suit (*Transhuman Space*, p. 152) or a heatsuit (*GURPS Ultra-Tech*, pp. 177-178).

*It seems that anything is possible on Mars.*

## The Marshal

The lone full-time U.S. Marshal in Port Lowell took this job entirely willingly. She doesn't consider that she has issues with authority; one or two superior officers whose orders she has very occasionally managed not to hear think differently.

She comes from what, in 2100 American terms, counts as a blue collar family, without any tradition of police work apart from her maternal grandfather, a career cop in Chicago who gave her the idea of working in law enforcement. She applied for assignment to Mars on some kind of complicated whim, mostly because she can make a very real difference here. She's on the planet for the long haul, and has become thoroughly acclimatized, although she hasn't ruled out the possibility of returning to Earth one day.

Her appearance suggests an indeterminate but definitely not young age; actually, that look is carefully cultivated. She usually wears her steel-gray hair in a tight plait, and in public, always wears a jacket that is bulky enough to denote armor, a cap (with Service logo), and an armored visor, and carries a couple of weapons, although she rarely expects to have to draw them.

Kirkowicz has a calmly cynical view of humanity; very little that she sees really disappoints her, so she doesn't get angry. Admittedly, Port Lowell doesn't very often expose her to the very worst of human nature, but she deals with her share of bioroid slavery and nanodrug abuse.

### *Althea Kirkowicz*

377 points

**ST** 10 [0]; **DX** 11 [20]; **IQ** 12 [40]; **HT** 13 [30].  
Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lb; HP 10 [0]; Will 13 [5]; Per 12 [0]; FP 13 [0].  
Basic Speed 6.00 [0]; Basic Move 6 [0]; Dodge 9.  
5'4"; 135 lbs.

### Social Background

*TL:* 10 [0].

*CF:* Western (Native) [0]; Oriental/Chinese [1].

*Languages:* English (Native) [0]; Cantonese (Broken) [2]; Mandarin (Accented) [4]; Spanish (Native) [6].

### Advantages

Allies (Group of 11-20 flying surveillance/combat cybershells; Built on 25%; Constantly; Minion, +0%) [32]; Allies (Group of 6-10 scout/surveillance cybershells; Built on 75%; Constantly; Minion, +0%) [72]; Charisma 1 [5]; Comfortable [10]; Fearlessness 2 [4]; Filter Lungs (Filter CO<sub>2</sub> only, -70%; Temporary Disadvantage, Increased Consumption 1, -10%; Andraste Biomod) [1]; Fit [5]; G-Experience 1 (1 G, native in 0.38) [1]; Genefixed Human (2035-2050) [0];

High Pain Threshold [10]; Legal Enforcement Powers [10]; Less Sleep 2 [4]; Night Vision 1 [1]; Police Rank 3 [15]; Reduced Consumption 2 (Air Only, +100%; Andraste Biomod) [8]; Regeneration (Slow; Radiation Only, -60%; DNA Repair Nanosymbionts) [4]; Reputation +1 (Law; Port Lowell; 10 or less) [1]; Resistant to Disease (+8; Immune Machine Nanosymbionts) [5]; Resistant to Nanomachines (+8; Guardian Nanosymbionts) [2]; Status 1\* [0]; Telecommunication (Cable Jack; Sensie, +80%; Temporary Disadvantage, Electrical, -20%) [8]; Telecommunication (Radio; Secure, +20%; Reduced Range x1/10, -30%; Temporary Disadvantage, Electrical, -20%) [7].

*Perks:* Deep Sleeper. [1]

*Features:* Low Pressure Lungs (Andraste Biomod).

### Disadvantages

Code of Honor (U.S. Marshal†) [-5]; Duty (The Job; 12 or less) [-10]; Pacifism (Cannot Harm Innocents) [-10]; Reputation -2 (Difficult Colleague; Marshal's Service; 7 or less) [-1].

*Quirks:* Not much sense of humor; Secretly a heavy virtual worlds devotee; Uncongenial. [-3]

### Skills

Area Knowledge (Mars) (E) IQ [1]-12; Area Knowledge (Port Lowell) (E) IQ+2 [4]-14; Armoury/TL10 (Body Armor) (A) IQ-1 [1]-11; Armoury/TL10 (Small Arms) (A) IQ-1 [1]-11; Beam Weapons/TL10 (Pistol) (E) DX+1 [2]-12; Criminology/TL10 (A) IQ+1 [4]-13; Current Affairs/TL10 (Port Lowell) (E) IQ [1]-12; Detect Lies (H) Per-1 [2]-11; Diplomacy (H) IQ-2 [1]-10; Electronics Operation/TL10 (Communications) (A) IQ+1 [4]-13; Electronics Operation/TL10 (Security) (A) IQ [2]-12; Electronics Operation/TL10 (Surveillance) (A) IQ+2 [8]-14; Electronics Repair/TL10 (Surveillance) (A) IQ [1]-12; Fast-Draw (Pistol) (E) DX+1 [2]-12; First Aid/TL10 (Human) (E) IQ+1 [2]-13; Forced Entry (E) DX+2 [4]-13; Forensics/TL10 (H) IQ-2 [1]-10; Guns/TL10 (Pistol) (E) DX+1 [2]-12; Guns/TL10 (Rifle) (E) DX [1]-11; Guns/TL10 (Shotgun) (E) DX [1]-11; Holdout (A) IQ-1 [1]-11; Interrogation (A) IQ+1 [4]-13; Law (American Police) (H) IQ+2 [12]-14; Law (Chinese Criminal) (H) IQ-2 [1]-10; Liquid Projector/TL10 (Sprayer) (E) DX [1]-11; Mechanic/TL10 (Robotics) (A) IQ-1 [1]-11; NBC Suit/TL10 (A) DX+1 [4]-12; Observation (A) Per-1 [1]-11; Savoir-Faire (Police) (E) IQ [1]-12; Search (A) Per+2 [8]-14; Shadowing (A) IQ-1 [1]-11; Streetwise (A) IQ [2]-12; Survival (Mars/Desert) (A) Per [2]-12; Tactics (H) IQ [4]-12; Wrestling (A) DX+1 [4]-12.

\* Includes +1 from Police Rank.

† A typical "police professional" code; do the job right and never dishonor the uniform.

However, the U.S. Marshals Service, which has overall responsibility for law and order in the Commonwealth, is spread extremely thin on Mars. Moreover, in a town where corporate security does most of the work, and the United States often has shaky jurisdiction at best, the Service sees no reason to run a large office or assign many permanent human staff.

Essentially, the Service has two key jobs here: First, it processes prisoners and trial paperwork when an unambiguous offense has been committed under federal law, hopefully after it has been investigated and the perpetrator has been arrested by a private security agency. Second, it deals with anything that looks like such an offense but that for some reason isn't being handled by anyone else. The first is largely a matter of automated bureaucracy, but often also needs someone on the ground, determining what really happened. (The second function definitely needs the human touch more often than not.) Many of the private security companies are reliable enough, but some aren't. The Marshals track all of them, with a view to clamping down in some way – if only through a memetic campaign – if any prove incompetent enough to threaten the general peace of the Commonwealth. Thus, the Service feels obliged to keep an eye on any and all law-and-order-related events in Port Lowell. Almost anything can turn into a federal matter sooner or later, and it's better not to be too surprised too often.

Nonetheless, there's exactly *one* U.S. Marshal in Port Lowell. Her name is Althea Kirkowicz (see p. 5), and she's a busy woman. People who meet her often take her for an old-fashioned, hard-bitten, slightly cranky professional, but her effectiveness in her job actually marks her as the epitome of Fifth Wave technical sophistication. Her personal record mostly reflects a successful career to date, although anyone with access to personnel reports might discover several notes about her not working well with others. She accomplishes her objectives through heavy use of automated systems; she's actually the controlling intelligence at the heart of a network of robotic cops and infomorph aides. She can handle the subtler parts of her job because she has software agents monitoring every accessible surveillance network and public data stream in town. The less subtle parts are mostly handled by armed cybershells.

Hence, her office is actually a workshop/garage as much as anything, although it's adjacent to a small building with a number of short-term holding cells. If she gets a situation that requires that a prisoner be held for investigation or trial for an extended period, she will contact the Service's head office and arrange for a prisoner transfer to Robinson City. Her own cells are highly automated and a rather stark, but completely humane. They're subject to all current laws about federal prison procedure, and the heavy automation that keeps costs down also makes it impossible to cover up any breaches of regulations. Anyone who is arrested by her can expect completely correct treatment, but no privacy whatsoever.

Marshal Kirkowicz expresses no opinions on how she'd like to treat prisoners, and shows no signs of impatience with the rules. To her, they're the framework within which she works; breaking them would be *unprofessional*. However, she has limited time, and her seemingly infinite patience comes at the cost

of limited sympathy for idiots. She also runs a force of security cybershells who know that they're authorized to use force, and who have no actual sympathy for anyone.

Away from her office, Marshal Kirkowicz will virtually always be accompanied by a small cluster of these very business-like cybershells – a mixture of fast, lightly armed surveillance buzzbot variants and heavier legged "securibots." Both are controlled by NAIs that are fully willing to sacrifice themselves to protect human lives if necessary, but that are also instructed not to waste expensive cybershells without good reason.

Off-duty and when not pursuing a scrupulous program of exercises, Althea relaxes mostly in virtual worlds, as this usually avoids any kind of conflict with her duties or professional concerns. Actually, some of her virtual avatars live complicated and very steamy soap-opera lives, and really look the part, but she always uses highly effective privacy schemes that make it impossible to connect them to her real-world existence.

### *Flying Gear on Mars*

Buzzbots and other heavier-than-air flying devices work fine on Mars, at least at low altitudes such as the area around Port Lowell. However, designs may need to be modified slightly, and air-breathing motors may have problems. The lower local gravity more or less exactly balances out the reduced lift available in the thinner local atmosphere.

### *Encounter Ideas*

The most obvious reason why PCs might meet Marshal Kirkowicz is of course because they are somehow involved in illegal activity in Port Lowell – as victims, perpetrators, or private investigators or enforcers. She may seem abrasive and cynical, but she appreciates competence, provided that it comes from someone who's on her side. She has to play by the book, but not too strictly – in the complicated legal environment of Port Lowell, a little bit of flexibility is absolutely necessary, but ignoring the rules and protocols too casually will lead to a world of hurt. If the Marshal has to investigate a crime, she'll be methodical and efficient, if not especially imaginative. She has access to excellent forensic expert systems, and can send complex problems up the ladder to Robinson City.

If she runs into a problem that looks like it really belongs to someone else, she'll bounce it their way at the first opportunity, and expect them to deal with it. If someone else sends a problem her way, she'll assess it carefully enough, but if it doesn't look like her business, she'll throw it right back. She makes an excellent contact, but the snag is that, despite her solitary posting, she just can't bend the rules very far, and she doesn't generally want to.

As a roleplaying encounter, the Marshal should mostly be played as a source of dry cynicism, realism, and occasionally sarcasm, who'll come along to clean up the worst messes in Port Lowell – but then make it clear that she doesn't want to have to repeat the process. The most difficult thing about her, from PCs' point of view, is that like many good NPC cops, she'll usually assume that the simplest explanation for an event is the correct one, whereas PCs tend to get involved in things that are weirder than they look.

*The Service keeps track of all law-related activity.*

# The Ambassador

The E.U.'s chief representative on Mars is second-generation diplomatic service; her mother was German and her father was French, and they met while working on an E.U. mission. She absorbed the attitudes of their world, and has moved smoothly back and forth between academia and government before settling mostly on the latter – but without forgetting her broad knowledge of history and political theory. If asked for her full name, she may well say “Frau Doctor Ambassador Colette Schmidt,” more or less challenging anyone to question the “Ambassador” part.

She works out of the Central Consular Services Office building, and has a small (and well-secured) private apartment elsewhere in the city. She isn't averse to getting out of the building from time to time, but she prefers to delegate; the embassy has excellent computer and communications facilities, which she likes using, and accessing them remotely is never as good. Her personal office has high-quality display screens on every wall, and she frequently transforms it into a huge virtual meeting space. Her personal online avatar is a near-perfect image of herself, which usually emulates her actual movements and expressions exactly; Schmidt believes in open communication. Of course, her expressions and body language don't always reflect her real feelings or reactions – she's a professional.

Schmidt is a highly experienced diplomat and bureaucrat. Her Intuition and Luck don't represent anything supernatural or even especially uncanny – she just has very good instincts, especially in social situations, and is highly unlikely to do anything disastrous. Those interacting with her should come to respect her, not because she's better at their jobs than they are, but because she's so *reliable* at her own. She has taken basic self-defense courses, but will avoid physical confrontations if at all possible.

## Colette Schmidt

321 points

**ST** 9 [-10]; **DX** 10 [0]; **IQ** 13 [60]; **HT** 11 [10].

Damage 1d-2/1d-1; BL 16 lb; HP 9 [0]; Will 13 [0]; Per 13 [0]; FP 11 [0].

Basic Speed 5.25 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0]; Dodge 8. 5'8"; 120 lbs.

### Social Background

*TL:* 10 [0].

*CF:* Western (Native) [0]; Japanese [1]; Oriental/Chinese [1].

*Languages:* German (Native) [0]; English (Native) [6]; French (Native) [6]; Japanese (Broken) [2]; Mandarin (Accented) [4].

### Advantages

Administrative Rank 3 [15]; Allies (Cluster of 10 assistant NAIs; Built on 25%; Constantly; Minions, +0%) [24]; Contact Group (European Academic-Diplomatic Community; Effective Skill 18; 9 or less; Somewhat Reliable) [15];

Diplomatic Immunity [20]; Extraordinary Luck (Aspected, Social Interactions, -20%) [24]; Filter Lungs (Filter CO<sub>2</sub> only, -70%; Temporary Disadvantage, Increased Consumption 1, -10%; Andraste Biomod) [1]; G-Experience 1 (0.38 G) [1]; Genefixed Human (2050 on) [0]; Immunity to Cancer (Carcinophage Nanosymbionts) [5]; Immunity to Known Bacteria (Bacteriophage Nanosymbionts) [5]; Immunity to Known Viruses (Virus Hunter Nanosymbionts) [5]; Intuition [15]; Longevity (Nanosymbiont Regime) [2]; Reduced Consumption 2 (Air Only, +100%; Andraste Biomod) [8]; Regeneration (Slow; Radiation Only, -60%; DNA Repair Nanosymbionts) [4]; Reputation +2 (Capable Operator, in Diplomatic Circles; All the Time) [5]; Resistant to Ingested Poison (+8; Liver Upgrade Biomod) [5]; Status 3\* [5]; Telecommunication (Radio; Reduced Range ×1/10, -30%; Temporary Disadvantage, Electrical, -20%) [5]; Wealthy [20].

*Perks:* Alcohol Tolerance (Liver Upgrade Biomod); Sanitized Metabolism (Nanosymbiont Regime). [2]

*Features:* Low Pressure Lungs (Andraste Biomod).

### Disadvantages

Duty (Diplomatic Service; 12 or less) [-5]; Pacifism (Reluctant Killer) [-5]; Squeamish (15) [-5].

*Quirks:* Prone to sarcasm in private communications; Very careful about keeping private conversations off the official record. [-2]

### Skills

Acting (A) IQ-1 [1]-12; Administration (A) IQ [2]-13; Area Knowledge (Earth) (E) IQ [1]-13; Area Knowledge (Mars) (E) IQ+1 [2]-14; Brawling (E) DX+1 [2]-11; Carousing (E) HT [1]-11; Computer Operation/TL10 (E) IQ [1]-13; Connoisseur (Visual Arts) (A) IQ-1 [1]-12; Current Affairs/TL10 (Business) (E) IQ [1]-13; Current Affairs/TL10 (Mars) (E) IQ+1 [2]-14; Current Affairs/TL10 (Politics) (E) IQ+1 [2]-14; Diplomacy (H) IQ [4]-13; Economics (H) IQ-2 [1]-11; Expert Skill (Memetics) (H) IQ-2 [1]-11; Expert Skill (Political Science) (H) IQ [4]-13; Free Fall (A) DX-1 [1]-9; Games (Go) (E) IQ+2 [4]-15; Group Performance (Directing) (A) IQ-1 [1]-12; History (21st Century Political) (H) IQ+1 [8]-14; History (21st Century Space) (H) IQ-2 [1]-11; Intelligence Analysis/TL10 (H) IQ-1 [2]-12; Intimidation (A) Will-1 [1]-12; Judo (H) DX-2 [1]-8; Law (International) (H) IQ-2 [1]-11; Liquid Projector/TL10 (Sprayer) (E) DX [1]-10; Literature (H) IQ-2 [1]-11; NBC Suit/TL10 (A) DX [2]-10; Performance (A) IQ-1 [1]-12; Politics (A) IQ+2 [8]-15; Psychology (Human, Applied) (H) IQ-1 [2]-12; Public Speaking (A) IQ [2]-13; Research/TL10 (A) IQ [2]-13; Savoir-Faire (High Society) (E) IQ+1 [2]-14; Sociology (H) IQ-2 [1]-11; Speed-Reading (A) IQ-1 [1]-12; Teaching (A) IQ [2]-13; Writing (A) IQ-1 [1]-12.

\* Includes +1 from each of Wealth and Administrative Rank.

## THE E.U. EMBASSY

Among the “businesses” that have set up shop in Port Lowell, some of the most surprising are embassies from terrestrial governments, including Japan, Saudi Arabia, Peru, and the European Union. Actually, despite the popular terminology on Mars, these aren’t really embassies at all.

Usually, an embassy is a “diplomatic mission” from one sovereign state, representing its interests to another such state on the other state’s territory. But Mars has *no* generally recognized sovereign state. For that matter, the E.U. in particular is not itself a nation-state; it is a supra-national federation, and so cannot appoint ambassadors as such. Several major governments have strong opinions on these matters: China and America are both somewhat hostile to the Free Mars movement, and so don’t want any more credibility attached to the image of Mars as an independent political entity than they can

help. Meanwhile, most E.U. members are still a little touchy about their status as, ultimately, independent nations with their own cultures and policies, and dislike being lumped in with all the others. But, in the end, the E.U. needs representation on Mars. So it has requested and received the right to establish consular-level representation in most of the national colonies, including full diplomatic privileges for a limited number of staff.

The E.U. embassy system is run from a building in Port Lowell that is officially termed the “Central Consular Services Office.” Its staff report to the Office of External Diplomatic Relations, part of the E.U. External Action Service, in Brussels. Colette Schmidt (see p. 7), who runs the CCSO, is officially the Head of Central Consular Services, not an ambassador. However, almost everyone refers to the office as the “European Embassy” and to her as an ambassador, in everything except the most formal documents.

## The Logistics AI

Strictly speaking, although the AI known as Quentin is fully sapient, and hence is a full citizen of the European Union (with Belgian nationality), he is a low-ranking member of the diplomatic service. He was designed a few years ago as a logistics system and put in charge of the embassy’s physical property and of managing shipments of goods to E.U. operations. In practice, though, the Martian tradition of jobs being handled by whoever is in place to deal with them has combined with Quentin’s outgoing nature to ensure that he actually ends up handling the greater part of the embassy’s supposedly low-level practical business.

Either that, or he’s a typical member of the E.U. AI conspiracy, preserving a facade of modest helpfulness to cover his attempts to take over human society.

Quentin is fairly closely derived from a number of pre-existing system designs, with enough variation that he cannot be accused of being a xox. He has nonetheless inherited experience and refinement from these sources, which manifests as both general intelligence and a complex, occasionally whimsical personality. He has enough free time to pursue at least one hobby – Robot Rallying, a sport that involves two or more players each taking control of several of a warehouse’s internal cybershells and running races and not-usually destructive duels. There is a whole body of rules for this, which Quentin weirdly claims are over a century old, and league tables on both Mars and Earth. The rules are designed for AI competitors, and make little allowance for anyone with merely human speeds of thought. Ambassador Schmidt knows about this hobby, and tolerates it so long as not too much damage gets done.

### “Quentin”

243 points

**ST** 0\* [0]; **DX** 10 [0]; **IQ** 12 [40]; **HT** 12\* [0].  
HP 12\* [0]; Will 12 [0]; Per 12 [0]; FP 0 [0].  
Basic Speed 5.50 [0]; Basic Move N/A; Dodge N/A; Parry N/A.

### Social Background

*TL:* 10 [0].

*CF:* Western (Native) [0]; Oriental/Chinese [1].

*Languages:* English (Native) [0]; Mandarin (Native) [6].

### Advantages

Administrative Rank 1 (E.U. Diplomatic Service) [5]; Comfortable [10]; Compartmentalized Mind 1 [50]; Modular Abilities 3 (Computer Brain; 8, 4, 4) (Limited Integration, -20%; Skills and Languages Only, -10%) [58]; Contact Group (Trucker’s Guild; Effective Skill 12; 12 or less; Somewhat Reliable) [10]; SAI-8 [173].

### Disadvantages

Duty (Embassy Logistics System; 12 or less) [-5]; Mainframe [-128]; Pacifism (Cannot Kill) [-15]; Social Stigma (Second-Class Citizen) [-5].

*Quirks:* Code of Honor (Always settles debts on time); Compulsive Games-Player; Habit (Overlays extended discussions with atonal music). [-3]

### Skills

Accounting (H) IQ [4]-12; Administration (A) IQ+1 [4]-13; Computer Operation/TL10 (E) IQ+3 [0]-15†; Electrician/TL10 (A) IQ-1 [1]-11; Electronics Operation/TL10 (Communications) (A) IQ+1 [4]-13; Electronics Operation/TL10 (Security) (A) IQ+1 [4]-13; Electronics Operation/TL10 (Sensors) (A) IQ [2]-12; Electronics Operation/TL10 (Surveillance) (A) IQ-1 [1]-11; Freight Handling/TL10 (A) IQ+2 [8]-14; Gambling (A) IQ [2]-12; Games (Chess) (E) IQ [1]-12; Games (Robot Rallying v.17) (E) IQ+2 [4]-14; Law (Martian Commercial) (H) IQ-1 [2]-11; Mathematics/TL10 (Statistics) (H) IQ-2 [1]-10; Merchant (A) IQ+1 [2]-13‡; Observation (A) Per [2]-12; Research/TL10 (A) IQ [2]-12; Smuggling (A) IQ [2]-12.

\* From Mainframe template.

† From SAI-8 template.

‡ Includes +1 from Memetics Talent 1 (from SAI-8).

The only people who try not to do so are those who are *aggressively* opposed to any sort of independence for the Martian colonies; allowing that a power like the E.U. might have “ambassadorial” representation here is giving away too much. This in turn *might* annoy Dr. Schmidt, although a professional diplomat would never show offense at someone else being formally correct.

Her privileges are almost exactly those of a full ambassador, and her position in the EAS bureaucratic hierarchy is appropriately high. (Whether going off-Earth at her level is a clever career move or career suicide is an interesting question.) The CCSO performs most of the functions of an embassy, including trade negotiations and – everyone assumes but is too polite to say – a bit of intelligence gathering. The Office has the added advantage of not suffering real-time telecommunications/VR oversight from home, unlike modern embassies on Earth. It also has full extraterritoriality – but given the ambiguities of “common courtesy” land ownership law on Mars, that’s pretty easy to claim.

Several major E.U. member states have some kind of independent consular representation on the planet. However, even they are often happy to leave things to “the E.U. embassy,” especially as their representatives are sometimes just AI clusters running on local networks, and a lot of diplomatic tasks still turn out to need a physical being putting feet on the ground. Still, the politics of all this do sometimes get complicated, on Mars and on Earth.

The embassy building is a small, rather anonymous block, on long-term lease from the MDC. It wasn’t built for the purpose, and in fact includes warehouse space as well as offices. This may seem odd, but in fact it’s a clue to the “embassy’s” secondary (perhaps even *primary*) function.

The E.U. has a significant number of citizens working on Mars, scattered thinly but making themselves *useful*. It sends doctors, engineers, negotiators, and scientists wherever they’re needed – and quietly but not secretly sponsors their activities. Quite often, this sponsorship has a very practical aspect; rather than asking the community where they are helping out to purchase the gear and supplies that they need, the E.U. will simply provide materials. These may be purchased on Mars, or even shipped from Earth where necessary. (This also has the secondary benefit of ensuring that a lot of the purchases are from European-owned or -run companies, or otherwise friendly sources.) The embassy building thus acts as a small but busy clearing-house for supplies, which sometimes have to be kept somewhere for a few days – and it’s easiest to use the embassy as a shipping center. Not much of this traffic moves under diplomatic pouch privileges, but that can be arranged when absolutely necessary.

Apart from that, the embassy has a small staff – exact numbers are left to the GM in individual campaigns, but remember that many functions that would require human attention at TL8 can be handled by AIs running on the building’s substantial static computer network in this setting. Most of the human personnel will be either mid-level negotiators or cultural

representatives; some will actually be on short-term contracts between other jobs around Mars, which are also almost always on the E.U.’s staff budget.

The CCSO *doesn’t* have a military attache; that would look unduly assertive. The fact that some of the more powerful AIs have interesting secondary training in Intelligence Analysis, and that there’s somehow always an E.U. warship somewhere near Mars space with all of its sensors working, is not something to raise in diplomatic discussion.

### The Secret

Only the diplomats themselves know that there is an . . . entity . . . named “Mr Grey,” who occasionally shows up in internal embassy online discussions, using a suitably shadowy avatar. “He” appears to be a polite fiction, a facade used by a network of whatever European military and intelligence operations are currently active in Martian space. “He” politely seeks to avoid entangling civilian diplomats in “his” work, but sometimes provides them with briefings.

*A diplomat is a fellow that lets you do all the talking while he gets what he wants.*

– Frank McKinney Hubbard

### Encounter Ideas

The E.U. embassy on Mars is obviously something with which European characters might have contact – asking for help, receiving requests to help European interests, or moving stuff around. (Requests generally take the form of “Would you mind taking our sponsorship to go work on the new Japanese factory on Elysium, at standard rates?” rather than “Please, as a good European citizen, go spy on the Chinese army base on Arsia Mons.” Either is *possible*, but the latter would be more likely to come through clandestine channels than from accredited diplomats)

For that matter, anyone who has dealings with E.U. citizens might find that the embassy gets involved. The diplomats will provide Europeans with legal advice, underwrite their contracts (and maybe provide some material aid if their work is good for the E.U.’s image), send observers and possibly more if they get into visible trouble, and protest sternly to local authorities if they are maltreated. The embassy doesn’t have much physical power (although it can always get calls through to any European warships that happen to be in Mars space), but it has *influence*. No government on Mars particularly wants to annoy the Europeans, and some owe them favors or regard them as honest brokers. And diplomats, by definition, have direct lines back to their government at home.

Beyond this, adventurers on Mars can find themselves working for the embassy. If a European on the planet needs help, and no embassy employees are in the right place or with the right skills, the embassy is authorized to employ approved contractors. This can be for anything from legal services through rescue operations to, in worst cases, personal protection or hostage rescue. The diplomats might be annoyingly keen to supervise, and fastidious about methods used and how the whole thing looks to the public, but they pay the going rates and on time.

Conversely, the embassy might be antagonists in a few situations. The E.U. doesn't have many secrets in these parts, but can be annoyingly self-righteous about the sort of thing that other people's covert ops teams get up to, and are highly protective of individual Europeans. They aren't likely to shoot you, though they *might* hire people to do that if you *really* annoy them, probably with electrolasers. However, they can sue you, blacken your name in European news media, and blow your cover – all with diplomatic immunity.

Finally, a team (probably mostly but not all E.U. citizens) could find themselves working for the embassy as a "field consular services team," running round Mars looking after European citizens who've got into trouble and defending European interests. This will mostly mean serving writs and chivvying rescue operations rather than shooting anyone, but frankly, it seems that, on Mars, anything is possible. This would, of course, be a framework for a whole campaign, with action, mysteries, politics, and the occasional idiot tourist for comic relief.

## THE GRANADINE PARTNERSHIP OFFICE

A lot of companies have offices in Port Lowell, varying in size from fair-sized corporate headquarters downward (although distributed, AI-mediated business practices in 2100 ensure that even "fair-sized" offices often employ just a few actual people). The offices run by the Granadine Partnership are at the small end of the scale.

The Partnership is a Europe-based, multinational association of design consultancies, mostly specializing in ergonomics. The company does just enough business on Mars, in the form of numerous small contracts, to require a presence on the planet. However, it can't justify more than a token presence (the actual work is done back on Earth), so the office is not far short of being purely virtual. The Partnership does rent some physical business space, mostly occupied by a mainframe, which in turn is controlled by an LAI named Callisto-Capri. The LAI handles most contract negotiations and so forth with the aid of a swarm of specialist NAIs. However, the company does have one mobile physical employee on the planet – a K-10A uplifted dog named Ferdinand (see p. 11).

This may seem eccentric – after all, it would be easy enough for Callisto-Capri to download to or teleoperate a cheap mobile cybershell at need – but the memetics of the arrangement are quite finely judged. By employing an organic being as part of their team, the Partnership projects an image of sympathy for organic needs and concerns – essential for a consultancy specializing in ergonomics. Frankly, although Granadine would never say as much, he's employed to be cute. Moreover, he's a *cheap* organic employee.

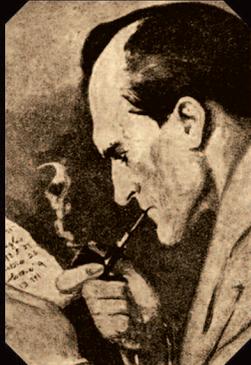
His actual job is basically to wear a set of sensors, instruments, and communications systems while visiting clients, and to be present in the Partnership's offices when anyone comes to call in person, giving it the look of a living space rather than a machine room. He can also act as a security guard, although that isn't really expected to be needed; still, he has some appropriate training. The E.U. grants K-10As some legal rights, so Ferdinand has a salary, mostly paid into an independent trust fund on his behalf, gets plenty of free time, and has access to a wide range of educational programs tailored for his species.

Ferdinand may not be a full citizen by E.U. law or that of many other jurisdictions active on Mars, but as an individual with many rights in law and convention, he does have a small apartment of his own in one of the accommodation blocks scattered around the city. This has a lot of simple automated systems that can handle housework, food preparation, fitting or removing Ferdinand's harness, and so on.

**GURPS** Fourth Edition

# MYSTERIES

The guide to more effective investigators.



**STEVE JACKSON GAMES**

## Granadine's Dog

Granadine's organic agent in Port Lowell was produced locally, with Mars adaptations built in from the embryo stage. He is otherwise a fairly standard K-10A postcanine, resembling a German Shepherd dog with an outsize skull. He usually wears a harness with an array of high-tech devices attached, but the gear is designed so that he can discard it easily (taking 1d Ready maneuvers).

Ferdinand's main hobby is participation in a small quasi-Neolithic virtual world, where he plays the part of a dire wolf. So do a lot of humans, and he has several casual online friends in his in-game pack; they may or may not know of his real-world nature. If anyone was actually paying him serious attention, they might be concerned to note that Ferdinand has largely abandoned his education program in favor of this hobby – but as he is a free organic being, none of his AIs have thought it appropriate to respond to this fact. Frankly, Ferdinand has learned rather too well how to make Granadine's NAIs do as he wishes.

He is still doing some reading in his free time, though. Nosing around the Web, he has encountered the "Animal Reparations" meme (*Toxic Memes*, pp. 103-5), and has accessed literature, including David Pan's *Dominion*. He doesn't really understand much of it, but he finds it very exciting.

### "Ferdinand"

22 points

**ST** 10 [0]; **DX** 13\* [0]; **IQ** 7\* [0]; **HT** 12\* [0].  
Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lb; HP 10 [0]; Will 10 [15]; Per 14\* [0]; FP 12 [0].

Basic Speed 6.25 [0]; Basic Move 6 [0]; Dodge 10\*. 2' 2"; 100 lbs.

### Social Background

*TL:* 10 [0].

*CF:* Western (Native) [0]; Oriental/Chinese [1].

*Languages:* English (Native/None) [0].

### Advantages

Filter Lungs (Filter CO2 only, -70%; Temporary Disadvantage, Increased Consumption 1, -10%; Mars Adaptation Biomods) [1]; Patron (Granadine Partnership Staff; 12 or less; Minimal Intervention, -50%) [10]; Reduced Consumption 2 (Air Only, +100%; Mars Adaptation Biomods) [8].

*Features:* Low Pressure Lungs (Mars Adaptation Biomods).

### Disadvantages

Callous [-5]; K-10A Postcanine [-24]; Overconfidence (15) [-2]; Stress Atavism self-control reduced to (9) [-5].

*Quirks:* Has absorbed a lot of the "Animal Reparations" meme; Thinks wolves are the epitome of cool. [-2]

### Skills

Area Knowledge (Mars) (E) IQ+1 [2]-8; Area Knowledge (Port Lowell) (E) IQ+3 [8]-10; Brawling (E) DX+2 [4]-15; Computer Operation/TL10 (E) IQ [1]-7; Intimidation (A) Will [2]-10; Observation (A) Per [2]-14; Running (A) HT [2]-12; Savoir-Faire (High Society) (E) IQ+1 [2]-8; Stealth (A) DX-1 [1]-12; Tracking (A) Per-1 [1]-13.

\* From K-10A Postcanine template.

The only problem with this arrangement – which was set up from Earth by people who regarded the situation as a distant problem to be solved as quickly and cheaply as possible – is that no one has a clue what's going through Ferdinand's head. Callisto-Capri is a fairly sophisticated AI, but it is, in the end, *low* sapient, and very bad at empathy. If anyone asked, it would claim to think of itself as Ferdinand's friend, but it is not actually at all clear about the postcanine's off-duty activities, friendships, or interests, and it doesn't think to ask. A few Granadine staff back on Earth take some sympathetic interest in Ferdinand, but they are a long way away and have limited resources to bring to bear. All in all, Ferdinand is a problem waiting to happen.

### Encounter Ideas

Visitors to Mars may have business dealings with the Granadine Partnership, in which case Ferdinand and their office arrangements can serve as just a bit of peculiar local color. More likely, though, they will somehow become involved when Ferdinand finally suffers the radical atavistic breakdown that is rather obviously looming in his near future. This could involve anything from him not turning up to work

because he'd rather be scavenging around the back streets of Port Lowell, through him taking a rented rover out into the desert and then telling it to drive round in circles while he sticks his head out of the window, to him attempting to go seriously wolf and actually attacking people.

The protagonists could be troubleshooters hired by the Partnership to deal with this problem (preferably *quietly*) E.U. embassy staff who get a worried message from Callisto-Capri about a "missing dog," security company employees investigating whatever crimes an atavistic dog might commit, reporters or sloggers chasing this nonhuman-interest story despite Granadine's attempts to keep it quiet, or just random bystanders trying to avoid being bitten, run over, or caught up in Granadine memetic damage-control operations.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The entity known as Phil Masters distinctly remembers generating the above text stream. It also believes itself to be a full citizen of the U.K., and a *GURPS* author of 20 years' standing, with such *Transhuman Space* titles as *Changing Times* and the *Personnel Files* series to its credit. It is the *Transhuman Space* Line Editor. None of this data has yet been proven false.

# WE ARE THE 9.9%

BY JASON “PK” LEVINE

Those new to the *Transhuman Space* setting can be overwhelmed by Fifth Wave society. Bioroids, memetics, informorphs, ghosts, Duncanites, and so on – this melange of complex concepts makes the setting unique and fun, but can present resistance to gamers who aren't ready to invest time to study it. In this case, the easiest approach is to start simple, saving the more exotic elements to be introduced gradually – but that's difficult to do if the game is set right in the middle of Atlanta or Singapore.

Gamers seeking to escape the Fifth Wave can do so in many locations, though the more exotic ones (e.g., the Lagrange points or Main Belt) offer just as much “setting shock” as the Fifth Wave, and even most Earthbound Third-Wave nations are “exotic” in that they're located *far* from where the typical *GURPS* player calls home. Fortunately, *Transhuman Space: Broken Dreams* details several transitional and forsaken locations, where the Third and Fourth Waves are nestled among the Fifth. A campaign that embraces the disenfranchised and “fringers” caused by this culture clash can have the best of all worlds, with just as much of each Wave as the GM wants (and as the players are ready for).

This transitional campaign frame assumes a game run in Los Angeles (*Broken Dreams*, pp. 97-104), due to its comfortable “familiarity factor” for American players. However, with only minimal tweaking, the concept, templates, and adventure seeds herein can be used anywhere from Nairobi to Alma-Ata . . . anywhere that you're willing to buck the system.

## WHAT HAS ANYONE EVER DONE FOR US?

*You know the world is full of the wealthy “haves,” with their high-end genetic upgrades and AI servants. Hell, you can't even head downtown without running into them. But you and your friends keep it real. You know this city and you know what it's like to struggle to survive in it. They call you “fringers” because you tend to stay off the grid – which is ironic considering how immersed in society you are. It just happens to be a part of society that the media and Eloi don't care much about.*

Before starting the game, it's important to talk about any moral limits and guidelines that should constrain the group. “Fringer” doesn't have to mean “criminal,” and neither term necessarily reflects on how good of a person you are. Decide what feels right for the group; e.g., “All of our PCs should

basically be good guys (no sociopaths or monsters) who break the law, but only when it won't really hurt anyone,” or, “We're all gangbangers, so we break the law freely and hurt or kill anyone directly opposing us, but protect those who are actually innocent.”

Also decide if you (collectively or individually) have an objective beyond “survive and thrive.” Is there an overarching goal that you'll be striving to reach over the course of the game? Likely options include but are not limited to:

- To overthrow this corrupt system and bring equality to all.
- To build your local asset (e.g., your gang or your business) into something with national (or greater!) scope.
- To carve out a local area (e.g., East L.A.) and effectively isolate it from the rest of the world.
- To improve your local area, raising the standard of living for everyone.
- To acquire enough personal power, funds, and/or legitimacy to escape fringe society.

Some of these goals are mutually incompatible, which is why it's good to work this out early on! However, this doesn't have to take place before the first session; there's nothing wrong with going on a few adventures before putting serious thought into what your characters' long-term plans might be.

## CHARACTER TEMPLATES

The following templates are designed for a “transitional Third-Wave street-level” game, and work best with a power level between 100 and 200 points. Players are not necessarily limited to these templates, however! Any appropriate PC is fine; see *Character Types* (*Broken Dreams*, p. 116) for advice.

### Activist

100 points

You believe strongly in some cause – or perhaps just in “power to the people!” Regardless, true strength comes in numbers, so you are skilled at rallying crowds to your side. In a Third-Wave setting, this means a mix of rabble-rousing via megaphone and spreading word through the Web.

It's up to the GM whether memetics will be an active part of the campaign or downplayed in the background. If the former, grab Current Affairs (Pop Culture) and Expert Skill (Memetics) to be a decent memehacker; if the latter, neither Brainwashing nor Expert Skill (Memetics) are appropriate choices.

**Attributes:** ST 10 [0]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 13 [60]; HT 10 [0].

**Secondary Characteristics:** Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs. ; HP 10 [0]; Will 13 [0]; Per 13 [0]; FP 10 [0]; Basic Speed 5.00 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

**Advantages:** 30 points chosen from ST +1 [10], HT +1 [10], Charisma 1-4 [5/level], Claim to Hospitality (Local group) [Varies], Combat Reflexes [15], Contact Group (Street; Skill-15; 6, 9, or 12 or less; Somewhat Reliable) [5, 10, or 20], Contacts (Media or Street; Skill-12, 15, or 18; 12 or less; Somewhat Reliable) [2, 4, or 6], Honest Face [1], Languages [2-6/language], Memetics 1-2 [10/level], Reputation +1 to +3 (Genuine activist; Those in touch with the streets; Always Recognized) [2, 5, or 7], Smooth Operator 1 [15], Voice [10], or WVI (see below) [4].

**Disadvantages:** -20 points chosen from Curious [-5\*], Enemy (Local Police or Media Corp; Watcher; 6, 9, or 12 or less) [-2, -5, or -10], Fanaticism (Take back the streets!) [-15], Obsession (see bulleted list, p. 12) [-5\* or -10\*], Sense of Duty (Local Fringers) [-5] or (All Fringers) [-10], Social Stigma (Criminal Record) [-5] or Minority Group [-10], Status -1 [-5], Stubbornness [-5], Vow (Never “sell out”) [-5], or Wealth (Struggling) [-10] or (Poor) [-15].

**Primary Skills:** Computer Operation (E) IQ [1]-13; Current Affairs (any) (E) IQ+1 [2]-14; Propaganda (A) IQ+2 [8]-15; and Public Speaking (A) IQ+1 [4]-14.

**Secondary Skills:** Five of Area Knowledge (any), Current Affairs (any other), or Savoir-Faire (High Society), all (A) IQ+1 [2]-14; Electronics Operation (Media), Leadership, Research, or Writing, all (A) IQ [2]-13; or Diplomacy, Expert Skill (Memetics), Law (U.S. Civil or Criminal), or Psychology (Human), all (H) IQ-1 [2]-12.

**Background Skills:** Five of Brawling or Guns (Pistol), both (E) DX [1]-10; Fast-Talk, Politics, Streetwise, or Teaching, all (A) IQ-1 [1]-12; Brainwashing or Sociology, both (H) IQ-2 [1]-11; Observation or Urban Survival, both (A) Per-1 [1]-12; or spend 1 point on any unchosen secondary skill at one level lower.

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

## Gangbanger

### 100 points

You're part of Locos También, Koro, the Maple Syndicate, or one of the smaller gangs trying to carve out a piece of the city. You and your fellow gangers are fiercely protective of your “turf,” which means that any outsiders infringing upon it need to be dealt with fiercely and quickly. It also means that you try to deal with local issues yourselves, rather than give the cops a reason to come into the neighborhood.

This template assumes that the GM is keeping biomod (Transhuman Space: Changing Times, p. 64) in the background of the game. If players are allowed to take them, you may use discretionary advantage points (or leftover character points) to do so.

It is crucial that anyone who wants to play a gangbanger says so before the campaign starts, so that everyone can be part of the same gang! There aren't many reasons for members of (e.g.) Koro and Locos También to work together even briefly, much less on a long-term basis. (Unless the group wants to reenact *West Side Story*, of course . . .)

**Attributes:** ST 11 [10]; DX 12 [40]; IQ 10 [0]; HT 12 [20].

**Secondary Characteristics:** Damage 1d-1/1d+1; BL 24 lbs. ; HP 11 [0]; Will 10 [0]; Per 10 [0]; FP 12 [0]; Basic Speed 6.00 [0]; Basic Move 6 [0].

**Advantages:** 20 points chosen from ST or HT +1 or +2 [10/level], DX or IQ +1 [20], HP +1 to +3 [2/level], Will or Per +1 to +3 [5/level], Allies (Gang Brothers; Built on 50%; 9, 12, or 15 or less) [2, 4, or 6/ally] or Patron (Gang; 9 or 12 or less) [10 or 20], Combat Reflexes [15], Contacts (Police or Street; Skill-12, 15, or 18; 12 or less; Somewhat Reliable) [2, 4, or 6], Danger Sense [15], Fearlessness 1-5 [2/level], High Pain Threshold [10], Rapid Healing [5], Reputation +1 to +3 (Fearsome; Locals familiar with gangs; Always) [2, 5, or 7], or WVI (see below) [4].

**Disadvantages:** Duty (Gang; 9 or less) [-5]. • Another -15 points chosen from Addiction [Varies], Bad Temper [-10\*], Bully [-10\*], Code of Honor (Pirate's) [-5], Compulsive Carousing [-5\*], Greed [-15\*], Impulsiveness [-10\*], Obsession (see bulleted list, p. 12) [-5\* or -10\*], Overconfidence [-5\*], Sense of Duty (Gang Brothers) [-5], Social Stigma (Criminal Record) [-5] or (Minority Group) [-10], Status -1 [-5], Wealth (Struggling) [-10] or (Poor) [-15], or worsen Duty to (12 or less) [-10] for -5 points or (15 or less) [-15] for -10 points.

**Primary Skills:** Area Knowledge (L.A.) (E) IQ+1 [2]-11; Guns (Pistol) (E) DX+1 [2]-13; Intimidation (A) Will+2 [8]-12; Streetwise (A) IQ+2 [8]-12. • One of Brawling or Knife, both (E) DX+1 [2]-13; Wrestling (A) DX [2]-12; or Holdout (A) IQ [2]-10.

**Secondary Skills:** Three of Forced Entry or Guns (any), both (E) DX+1 [2]-13; Driving (Automobile or Motorcycle), Stealth, or Throwing, all (A) DX [2]-12; Leadership, Merchant, or Smuggling, all (A) IQ [2]-10; Tactics (H) IQ-1 [2]-9; Observation or Urban Survival, both (A) Per [2]-10; or add any unchosen primary skill.

## WVI

While “AI servants” are a hallmark of the rich, the GM may feel that PCs with wearable virtual interfaces (and basic NAIs) will not throw off the feel of the campaign. For simplicity, treat this as a new ability:

**WVI:** Ally (NAI with Wearable Virtual Interface; Built on 25%; Constantly) [4]. \$1,150 if acquired in play. 4 points.

For added realism, the owner's Wealth level can affect the quality of both his NAI and network service level. This acts as a modifier to the NAI's Computer Operation – the skill it uses most often to help the owner! (It also affects the cost of the WVI itself, if acquired in play.) This change adds some complexity, but may help to further drive home the difference between “haves” and “have-nots.” Dead Broke precludes having a WVI or any network access, while anyone Very Wealthy or above should design a custom AI, possibly increasing the value of the Ally advantage.

Wealth	Modifier	Effective Skill	Cost (\$)
Poor	-2	9	×0.2
Struggling	-1	10	×0.5
Average	–	11	×1
Comfortable	+1	12	×2
Wealthy	+2	13	×5

**Background Skills:** *Two* of Fast-Draw (Pistol or Knife) (E) DX [1]-12; Axe/Mace or Broadsword, both (A) DX-1 [1]-11; Current Affairs (L.A.) (E) IQ [1]-10; Acting or Gambling, both (A) IQ-1 [1]-9; Carousing or Swimming, both (E) HT [1]-12; Scrounging (E) Per [1]-10; or spend 1 point on any unchosen primary or secondary skill at one level lower.

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

## Gunjin

100 points

You work for a police department, intelligence agency, or corporate security firm. In theory, that gives you a certain degree of authority; in practice, not everyone recognizes it. The average citizen is likely to respect your badge, but there are certain parts of the city (e.g., Industry) where broadcasting your credentials would be suicidal. (Alternatively, you may be completely freelance or a vigilante, with no required advantages or Duty.)

Due to high crime and few resources, even multinational corps and federal bureaus are stretched paper-thin in this area, so you often must work with lesser evils to stop the greater ones. The line between “informant” and “teammate” can become blurry; when bargaining for help, your agency is limited in what it can offer, which means you frequently find yourself trading favor for favor . . . off the books. This doesn’t preclude Honesty, as long as these favors never cross the line into illegality.

**Attributes:** ST 10 [0]; DX 11 [20]; IQ 12 [40]; HT 10 [0].

**Secondary Characteristics:** Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs. ; HP 10 [0]; Will 12 [0]; Per 12 [0]; FP 10 [0]; Basic Speed 5.25 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

**Advantages:** *One* of Administrative Rank 1 [5], Legal Enforcement Powers [5], or Security Rank 1 [5]. • Another 20 points to add or improve any trait from the previous list, to improve any attributes or secondary characteristics, or to add Police Rank [5/level]. Rank past 3 requires GM permission. • A further 15 points chosen from Charisma 1-2 [5/level], Combat Reflexes [15], Common Sense [10], Contacts (Police or Street; Skill-12, 15, or 18; 12 or less; Somewhat Reliable) [2, 4, or 6], Danger Sense [15], Fit [5], Languages [2-6/language], Security Clearance [Varies], or WVI (see p. 13) [4].

**Disadvantages:** Duty (Job; 9 or less) [-5]. • Another -15 points chosen from Bad Temper [-10\*], Bully [-10\*], Honesty [-10\*] or Secret (Corrupt) [-10], Intolerance [-5 or -10], Obsession (see bulleted list, p. 12) [-5\* or -10\*], Overconfidence [-5\*], Pacifism (Cannot Harm Innocents) [-10], Sense of Duty (Friends or Cops) [-5] or (Law-Abiding Citizens) [-10], Status -1 [-5], Stubbornness [-5], Wealth (Struggling) [-10] or (Poor) [-15], or worsen Duty to (12 or less) [-10] for -5 points or (15 or less) [-15] for -10 points.

**Primary Skills:** Area Knowledge (L.A.) (E) IQ [1]-12; Law (appropriate procedural or U.S. Criminal) (H) IQ-1 [2]-11; Streetwise (A) IQ [2]-12; and Writing (A) IQ-1 [1]-11. • *Two* of Beam Weapons (Pistol), Brawling, Guns (Pistol), all (E) DX+1 [2]-12; Tonfa or Wrestling, both (A) DX [2]-11; or Judo (H) DX-1 [2]-10.

**Secondary Skills:** *Four* of Driving (any) or Stealth, both (A) DX [2]-11; Acting, Criminology, Fast-Talk, Forensics, Holdout, Interrogation, or Shadowing, all (A) IQ [2]-12;

Diplomacy (H) IQ-1 [2]-11; Observation or Search, both (A) Per [2]-12; Detect Lies (H) Per-1 [2]-11; add any unchosen primary skill; or spend 2 points for +1 to any of these skills.

**Background Skills:** *Two* of Computer Operation or First Aid, both (E) IQ [1]-12; Administration, Disguise, or Public Speaking, all (A) IQ-1 [1]-11; Swimming (E) HT [1]-10; Running (A) HT-1 [1]-9; Intimidation (A) Will-1 [1]-11; or spend 1 point on any unchosen primary or secondary skill at one level lower.

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

## Skiptracer

100 points

You’re trained in locating people who have gone missing, voluntarily or otherwise. This usually involves following credit reports, job applications, utility bills, and such – but often requires you to interview people and investigate situations to see where reality differs from computer records.

This template covers a *wide* range of professions! Bounty hunters locate *and retrieve* people who’ve dropped off the grid; the same skill set is appropriate for an abduction recovery specialist (though their goals include trying to avoid any physical conflict with kidnappers). Debt collectors may work for a legitimate agency, but are at least as likely to work for a loan shark or gang; their job is to harass the debtor until he pays up. Investigators, who are often freelance, specialize in finding out *why* the person went missing, and what’s really going on. Repossessors are similar to debt collectors, but seek the retrieval of specific equipment, which often requires the skill to operate it.

**Attributes:** ST 10 [0]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 13 [60]; HT 10 [0].

**Secondary Characteristics:** Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs. ; HP 10 [0]; Will 13 [0]; Per 13 [0]; FP 10 [0]; Basic Speed 5.00 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

**Advantages:** 30 points chosen from ST or HT +1 to +3 [10/level], DX +1 [20], Per +1 to +3 [5/level], Basic Move +1 or +2 [5/level], Combat Reflexes [15], Contact Group (Any; Skill-15; 6, 9, or 12 or less; Somewhat Reliable) [5, 10, or 20], Contacts (Administrative or Street; Skill-12, 15, or 18; 12 or less; Somewhat Reliable) [2, 4, or 6], Intuition [15], Legal Enforcement Powers [5 to 15], Rank (any) [5/level]; Serendipity 1 [15], Single-Minded [5], or WVI (see p. 13) [4].

**Disadvantages:** -20 points chosen from Bad Temper [-10\*], Bully [-10\*], Curious [-5\*], Code of Honor (Professional) [-5], Duty (to organization or boss) [Varies], Greed [-15\*], Honesty [-10\*], Obsession (see bulleted list, p. 12) [-5\* or -10\*], Overconfidence [-5\*], Pacifism [Varies], Status -1 [-5], Stubbornness [-5], Wealth (Struggling) [-10] or (Poor) [-15], or Workaholic [-5].

**Primary Skills:** Accounting (H) IQ-1 [2]-12; Area Knowledge (L.A. and California) (E) IQ [1]-13; Computer Operation (E) IQ+1 [2]-14; and Research (A) IQ+1 [4]-14. • *One* of these 10-point professional packages:

1. *Bounty Hunter.* Brawling and Guns (Pistol), both (E) DX+2 [4]-12; and Intimidation (A) Will [2]-13.
2. *Debt Collector.* Detect Lies (H) Per [4]-13; Intimidation (A) Will+1 [4]-14; and Psychology (H) IQ-1 [2]-12.
3. *Investigator.* Intelligence Analysis (H) IQ+1 [8]-14. • *Either* Criminology (A) IQ [2]-13 or Psychology (H) IQ-1 [2]-12.

4. *Repossessor*. Driving (Automobile or Heavy Wheeled) (A) DX+1 [4]-11. • Spend a further 6 points on technical skills to recognize and operate the gear you repossess. Optionally, spend 4 of those 6 points to raise Driving one level.

**Secondary Skills:** *Four* of Brawling, Forced Entry, or Guns (Pistol), all (E) DX+1 [2]-11; Driving (any) or Wrestling, both (A) DX [2]-10; Criminology, Electronics Operation (Security or Surveillance), Fast-Talk, Forensics, Interrogation, Photography, Shadowing, or Streetwise, all (A) IQ [2]-13; Diplomacy, Law (U.S. Criminal), or Psychology, all (H) IQ-1 [2]-12; Body Language, Lip Reading, Observation, Search, or Tracking, all (A) Per [2]-13; or Detect Lies (H) Per-1 [2]-12. • Do not duplicate any primary skills.

**Background Skills:** *Two* of Area Knowledge (any), Current Affairs (any), or Savoir-Faire (any), all (E) IQ [1]-13; Acting, Administration, Disguise, Holdout, Lockpicking, or Writing, all (A) IQ-1 [1]-12; Carousing (E) HT [1]-10; Urban Survival (A) Per-1 [1]-12; or spend 1 point on any unchosen secondary skill at one level lower.

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

## Slogger

100 points

Though short for “slink logger” (that is, someone who shares personal experiences recorded via an uplink), this term has entered common use to refer to *anyone* devoted to sharing interesting life experiences via the Web – even if only via digital pictures and well-written text. Sloggers occupy a vital social role, from providing insight into local culture to covering news that the “big channels” have yet to notice or have deemed beneath their purview. In a city like L.A., where the nightlife trends change weekly and there’s no shortage of dangerous crime, those who want to know what’s really going on search the slogger feeds *first*. Sloggers tend to specialize; consider focusing on a niche like pop culture, below-the-radar news, or dangerous situations.

**Attributes:** ST 10 [0]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 13 [60]; HT 10 [0].

**Secondary Characteristics:** Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs. ; HP 10 [0]; Will 13 [0]; Per 13 [0]; FP 10 [0]; Basic Speed 5.00 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

**Advantages:** 35 points chosen from among DX +1 [20], HT +1 or +2 [10/level], Per +1 to +3 [5/level], Basic Speed +1.00 [20], Accessory (Uplink) [1], Charisma 1-2 [5/level], Combat Reflexes [15], Contact Group (Any; Skill-15; 6, 9, or 12 or less; Somewhat Reliable) [5, 10, or 20], Contacts (Any; Skill-12, 15, or 18; 12 or less; Somewhat Reliable) [2, 4, or 6], Daredevil [15], Fearlessness 1-5 [2/level], Pop-Culture Maven [5/level], Reputation +1 to +3 (Knowledgeable and entertaining; Everyone; 10 or less) [2, 5, or 7]; Serendipity 1-2 [15/level], Smooth Operator [15/level], or WVI (see p. 13) [4].

**Disadvantages:** -20 points chosen from Chummy [-5] or Gregarious [-10], Compulsive Carousing [-5\*], Curious [-5\*], Delusion (“I’m a household name!”) [-5] or (“As the press, I’m allowed to go anywhere!”) [-10], Greed [-15\*], Impulsiveness [-10\*], Jealousy [-10], Lecherousness [-15\*], Obsession (see bulleted list, p. 12) [-5\* or -10\*], Overconfidence [-5\*], Selfish [-5\*], Status -1 [-5], or Wealth (Struggling) [-10] or (Poor) [-15].

**Primary Skills:** Computer Operation and Current Affairs (L. A), both (E) IQ+1 [2]-14; *and* Writing (A) IQ [2]-13. • *Four* of Current Affairs (People or Popular Culture) (E) IQ+1 [2]-14; Electronics Operation (Media), Performance, Public Speaking, or Research, all (A) IQ [2]-13; Intelligence Analysis (H) IQ-1 [2]-12; or spend 2 points for +1 to any primary skill.

**Secondary Skills:** *Three* of Brawling (E) DX+1 [2]-11; Climbing, Stealth, or Wrestling, all (A) DX [2]-10; Area Knowledge (L.A.) (E) IQ+1 [2]-14; Disguise, Fast-Talk, Shadowing, or Streetwise, all (A) IQ [2]-13; Carousing (E) HT [1]-10; Observation (A) Per [2]-13; or any unchosen primary skill.

**Background Skills:** *Five* of Current Affairs (Business, High Culture, Science & Technology, or Sports) or Savoir-Faire (any), both (E) IQ [1]-13; Administration or Connoisseur (Virtual Reality Arts), both (A) IQ-1 [1]-12; Economics, Expert Skill (Memetics or Political Science), Literature, or Sociology, all (H) IQ-2 [1]-11; Scrounging (E) Per [1]-13; Urban Survival (A) Per-1 [1]-12; or spend 1 point on any unchosen primary or secondary skill at one level lower.

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

## GUERREIROS IN THE MIST

This sample campaign is presented as a series of ordered adventure seeds. Although it uses specific organizations and names – see *The CBI, Burke, and the Guerreiros* (p. 16) for details – the GM should replace *as much of this as possible* with things that tie into the heroes’ lives. Does one PC come from a family that used to be wealthy, but fell from grace when they ran afoul of a corrupt senator? Then replace Assistant Director Burke with that wicked Congressman! The basic concepts and themes of this campaign will function with almost any antagonists in political power.

### Setting the Stage

The first adventure works best as a short (one- or two-session) *prologue* that introduces the threat of the Guerreiros. Don’t tell the players that, of course! This should be a stand-alone challenge that caters to the PCs’ strengths while featuring the Guerreiros in the background – *not* as primary antagonists! Customize your own plot or use the following.

A neighborhood connected to the group (e.g., the gang-bangers or gunjin protect it, or the activists or sloggers are making a documentary about it) has a problem. The water pipes there are corroded and dangerous, but the utility company refuses to acknowledge it. Depending on the PCs, they may respond with anything from creating a propaganda campaign to kicking down the front door of the water company! Regardless, when they need to get to a key objective (such as the company itself, or the people who can help distribute the propaganda meme), they have to head through Guerreiro territory. This will (hopefully) not result in a firefight, as posturing and/or diplomacy will win out. (If not, the police can interrupt a fight that’s going poorly for the team.)

Many of the Guerreiros wear nanoweave armor (expensive and uncommon!) and some carry police armguns (illegal). A successful Current Affairs (L.A.), Intelligence Analysis, or Streetwise roll suffices to know that no other gangs in the area are equipped well enough to “waste” such gear on the rank-and-file gangbangers.

## Out of the Shadows

The Guerreiros make a move on the Koro gang, attacking one of their brainbug facilities near the Floats. This sets off a wave of violence as Koro retaliates. However, Koro is not as well-equipped as the Guerreiros and suffers heavy losses.

If the PCs are *in* a gang, then this adventure is very straightforward. The Guerreiros attack *their* brainbug center (instead of Koro's, if different), forcing them to retaliate. Once the heroes realize that they're outmatched in terms of tech, they'll need to come up with innovative tactics to get everyone back to safe turf in one piece.

Otherwise, the group is caught in the middle of both sides. This can be run as a short, "surprise" adventure: The team is eating at a food stand, the bullets start flying, and they have to make it out alive. Or, if certain PCs would have reason to get involved, the gang war can be dragged out long enough to provide a backdrop of violence across a full-length escapade. For example, a group focused more on investigation and reporting may want to get to the bottom of what sparked this war, or a team of activists and gunjin can hole up in a hospital to protect the patients from *both* gangs seeking a tactical advantage.

## Something Fishy

The next few adventures feature the Guerreiros becoming more dangerous and more expansionist. They're always well-equipped and consistently remain one step ahead of the police. But the specifics of this stage of the campaign will depend heavily on the focus of the characters and the kind of game the players wanted.

For heavy action, the group can go head-to-head with the Guerreiros in a wide variety of situations. This will get boring if it's just one gunfight after another, though, and even the most incurious PCs know that they need to cut off the Guerreiros' weapons at the source. As a way to combine action

and information-gathering, have an ally suggest they kidnap an important gang leader for interrogation. Or force them to rescue one of their own because the Guerreiros had the same idea! This can be played out as a heist or as a running car chase, whichever feels more right.

A team that prefers a more highbrow approach will likely realize that this equipment is coming from *somewhere*, and can begin tracking it down using street contacts and eventually (with luck) moving into the world of state politics. This doesn't mean a lack of action, of course; the Guerreiros won't take kindly to others poking into their business! The trail can lead all over the city, giving the GM a chance to show off the picaresque side of L.A.

## Let's See Who's Under This Mask

Burke is careful and distant, but he *does* remain in regular contact with his three original, core members. Capturing and interrogating any of them may reveal the true plan, as can finding a way to tap into their communication. But *knowing* the truth and *proving* it are two very different things! For all purposes, Burke is in charge of the local ("Layla") CBI office, and controls the information going back to Sacramento. The two plans most likely to succeed are turning Burke's subordinates against him (most of them know nothing of his plan) or finding a way to catch Burke red-handed with evidence of his involvement. As with most games, the GM should evaluate the player's plans, give them a chance to spot any holes in their logic, and then throw enough monkey wrenches into things to keep it challenging.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jason Levine is a PK-series bioroid, vocationally trained to serve as the Assistant *GURPS* Line Editor. His "guardianship" term of indentured servitude will be up in 2116.

## The CBI, Burke, and the Guerreiros

In 2100, the California Bureau of Investigation is a law enforcement entity that liaisons with the California Attorney General's office and (to a lesser degree) with the FBI. It lacks actual street-level officers; instead, its Law Enforcement Intelligence Unit (LEIU) coordinates with local police departments and borrows their resources as needed. A surprising number of CBI staff are SAIs; many feel that they do more good here, where they can focus on the "big picture."

Los Angeles is large (and troublesome) enough to have its own task force within the CBI: the clumsily named "CBI-LEIU-LA," which even the SAIs usually shorten to "Layla" in conversation. CBI-LEIU-LA is currently headed by Assistant Director Rutherford Burke, a 46-year-old Alpha upgrade. Memetically, he tends toward conservatism, with the exceptions of a slight Green streak and the sincere belief that Los Angeles can only survive if it is surreptitiously transformed into a police state.

Burke has kept the last bit hidden from most of his coworkers, only bringing in a few true believers. His plan

is to gradually "seed" L.A. with a new gang, the *Guerreiros* (Portuguese for "warriors") and to use his CBI connections to supply them with advanced equipment and tactical information: inside information about other gangs, police movement, etc. With this assistance, the Guerreiros should be able to effectively displace the other gangs within a few years, after which Burke can use them as a proxy police force – as his eyes, ears, and hands.

At the core of the gang are three of Burke's most trusted street informants, the only Guerreiros who truly know what's going on. Those three have recruited a dozen lieutenants who know a small part of the picture – that their goal is to take over L.A. with the help of the Guerreiros' "partnership with various tech dealers and information brokers," after which they'll run the city. The gang indoctrination comes with the standard memetic payload of loyalty, both to the gang *and* the "external partnerships" required for the city takeover to go smoothly. The rank-and-file gangbangers know little to nothing past "stay alive, make money, and Guerreiros for life!"

**GURPS** Fourth Edition

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# EIDETIC MEMORY

## WEAPONS AND UNITS OF THE HONDURAN CIVIL WAR

BY DAVID L. PULVER

Central America is at the forefront of the struggle between nanosocialism and free-market capitalism. In recent years, Honduras has been a front-line state in that conflict, as its impoverished people followed the lead of Guatemala in democratically electing (in 2009) a nanosocialist government.

Dania Salgado's partido Nanosocialista de Honduras was able to reverse some longstanding economic and social problems – notably improving the status of women and reducing crime – but also was faced with an embargo by the World Trade Organization and the overt hostility of most of the world's great and regional powers, especially its powerful neighbors Mexico and the United States. Not content at mere protest, the United States also lent diplomatic and CIA support to strident anti-nanosocialist opposition leader Carlos Zepeda, whose attempt at a coup in 2003 disastrously backfired, pushing Honduras into the radical camp of the Transpacific Alliance.

As an impoverished Third Wave nation, Honduras lacks much in the way of a military budget or advanced technology. However, before the WTO embargo, it was a major center for international trade (much of through its large deep-water ocean port at Puerto Cortes). It should not be forgotten that even the poorest Third Wave nation has access to legacy technology more advanced than that possessed by the most wealthy and powerful nations in 2013! The following inexpensive but relatively effective Third Wave military technology is in regular use in Honduras (as well as Peru and other TSA nations).

### PERICO

-62 points

Even Third Wave units generally operate with some form of drone support. In fact, it's more important as they cannot count on reliable satellite comms. The Perico is a small bird-sized reconnaissance shell, using an X-wing rotor system. Each platoon has a Vengador command vehicle that controls a flock of a half-dozen Pericos; special forces units have one assigned to each squad. The cybershell is similar to the buzzbot (*Transhuman Space*, p. 121). However, it is smaller

and less sophisticated, lacking any manipulatory ability, but it is equipped with a basic but militarily useful suite of sensors and secure communication gear. The tiny weapon mount can carry a micro-missile pod, though the Honduran Army has reserve pods for only 20% of its Pericos, and half of these are equipped with simple rockets (with only Acc 1) rather than homing missiles.

**Attribute Modifiers:** ST-8 [-80]; HT+1 [10].

**Secondary Characteristic Modifiers:** SM -3.

**Advantages:** Absolute Direction (Requires Signal, -20%) [4]; Damage Resistance 2 (Can't Wear Armor, -40%) [6]; Doesn't Breathe (Oxygen Consumption, -50%) [10]; Extra Arm (Weapon Mount, -80%) [2]; Flight (Temporary Disadvantage, Noisy 2, -4%) [39]; Infravision [10]; Machine [25]; Telecommunication (Cable Jack; Video, +40%) [7]; Telecommunication (Radio; Video, +40%; Secure +20%) [16]; Telescopic Vision 2 [10]; Temperature Tolerance 2 [2].

**Disadvantages:** Cybershell Body [-15]; Increased Consumption 3 (Requires refueling, 1-hour endurance) [-30]; Maintenance (Electronics Repair and Mechanic skills, 2 people, Monthly) [-4]; No Legs (Aerial) [0]; No Sense of Smell/Taste [-5]; No Manipulators [-50]; Restricted Diet (Common, diesel fuel) [-20].

**Perks:** Accessory (Tiny Computer) [1].

**Features:** Individuals of the same model closely resemble each other.

**Cost:** \$170 + computer.

*In a civil war, the firing line  
is invisible; it passes through  
the hearts of men.*

– Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

# PARANG

328 points

This moderately inexpensive winged armed reconnaissance drone is the size of a small car. It uses a shrouded pusher-style turboprop engine. It possesses a stealthy, smoothly contoured composite hull. An internal bay allows it to carry up to 80 lbs. of weaponry or extra electronics. A TSA joint venture, it is based on a pirated 2030s-era Turkish UCAV design upgraded with Indonesian cybernetics and newer Malaysian AI software. Although mostly a late-TL8 design, it has a modern Malaysian-built electronics package. In 2007, some 60 of these drones and supporting equipment, surplus to Peru's military, were provided to the Honduran government as part of a TSA aid package. It is usually controlled by NAI backed up by a human operator. The Parang is a slow tactical support design rather than being built for air-to-air combat.

**Attribute Modifiers:** ST+10 (No Fine Manipulators, -40%; Size, -20%) [40]; HT+2 [20].

**Secondary Characteristic Modifiers:** SM+2.

**Advantages:** 3D Spatial Sense [10]; Chameleon 3 (Extended, Infrared and Radar, +40%) [21]; Detect (Radar and Radio; Precise, +100%; Signal Detection, +0%) [20]; Doesn't Breathe (Oxygen Consumption, -50%) [10]; DR 20 (Can't Wear Armor, -40%) [60]; Enhanced Move 2.5 (Air; Temporary Disadvantage, Increased Consumption 2, -20%) [40]; two Extra Arms (Weapon Mount, -80%) [4]; Extra Wheels (3 wheels) [5]; Flight (Winged, -25%) [30]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Hyperspectral Vision [25]; Machine [25]; Nictitating Membrane 5 [5]; Payload 10 [10]; Protected Sense (Hearing) [5]; Resistant to Acceleration (+8) [2];

Resistant to Electrical Pulses and Surges (+3) [1]; Scanning Sense (Radar; Extended Arc, 360°, +125%; Multi-Mode, +50%; Increased Range x20, +40%) [63]; Telecommunication (Cable Jack; Video, +40%) [7]; Telecommunication (Laser Communication; Video, +40%) [21]; Telecommunication (Radio; Video, +40%; Increased Range x5, +20%, Secure, +20%) [18]; Temperature Tolerance 10 [10].

**Perks:** Accessory (Microframe Computer). [1]

**Disadvantages:** Cybershell Body [-15]; Horizontal [-10]; Maintenance (Electronics Repair and Mechanic skills, 4 people, Weekly) [-15]; No Legs (Wheeled) [-20]; No Manipulators [-50]; No Sense of Smell/Taste [-5]; Restricted Diet (Common, diesel fuel) [-20].

**Features:** Individuals of the same model closely resemble each other.

**Date:** 2088 design. **Cost:** \$101,761 + computer

# M171 PICKETT (SALAMANDRA)

955 points

The Pickett is an 8'-long, armored, fully tracked cybershell vehicle, massing about six tons. It is equipped with a pedestal-mounted heavy weapon, usually a railgun or laser. It is protected by sloped composite laminate armor (rather than the more advanced electromagnetic armor used in modern systems). It is powered by a turbocharged diesel engine, which gives it a top speed of about 40 mph. Various sensor and communication arrays are installed. Only a token effort was made toward signature reduction, and the engine is as loud as a typical truck.

## Second Mobile Infantry Brigade

The major regular unit operating against the rebels, it is mostly composed of young conscripts, stiffened by a cadre of Guatemalan and Peruvian military advisors. Infantry are equipped at simple Third Wave standards: basic battle rifles with (not smart) ammunition, nanoweave or carbon-weave vests, GPS, light infantry helmets, short-range secure radios, and low-light night vision gear. Only vehicle commanders, squad leaders, and officers have virtual interfaces (running NAIs). Heavy weapons include various machine guns, automatic cannons, mortars, and missile launchers at the squad and platoon level. Most units deploy as motorized infantry using the light Vengador wheeled APC (pp. 20-21), with integral tactical recon support provided by the Perico drone (p. 18).

**2nd Tactical Aviation Group:** Part of the nation's small air force, operating in support of the 2nd Brigade. It deploys three squadrons of Parang UCAVs (above) plus some lightly armed and armored helicopters, air cars, and tilt-rotor aircraft for tactical transport.

**Fuerzas Especiales de la Dirección:** An elite counter-guerrilla unit of the Honduran Army operating in the northern part of the country and dedicated to hunting down anti-nanosocialist guerrillas. Its members have better training and are equipped with a variety of support

cybershells and rifles with micro-missile or mini-missile launchers with HEMP warheads. Some missions are accompanied by agents from the External Intelligence and Acquisition directorates of the TSA (mostly agents of Peru's GESM) who are less interested in helping the government than in acquiring whatever interesting bits of U.S. military technology they can get their hands on from captured or destroyed CIA-supported guerrillas.

**31st Rangers:** A newly arrived platoon-sized unit of TSA mercenaries, composed of nanosocialist fanatics, most of them exiled Thailand military veterans. They are light infantry, but equipped to Fourth Wave standards, with extensive combat experience against Chinese soldiers and Indonesian rebels.

**1st Armored Strike Battalion:** The most powerful unit in the Honduran Army, and one of only two battleshell teletrooper units deployed in the country (the other protecting the capital and presidency). The 1st Armored is equipped with three under-strength companies of M171 Picketts (plagued by some regular breakdowns; see above), an HQ company of command, mortar, and air defense vehicles (based on the Vengador) and a company of recovery/maintenance trucks. About half the personnel are foreign contractors from other TSA countries.

## Battleshells in the Military

In military parlance, the Pickett is not a RATS, but rather belongs to that class of robot weapon system known as “battleshells.” A battleshell is a vehicle-sized ground combat robot too big to fit through a door, but somewhat smaller than a compact civilian car. First largely deployed by the United States in the 2030s as infantry support for light infantry units (initially deploying with the 10th Mountain Division), first-generation battleshells like the Pickett are now a common sight in Third World armories, as they are cheaper than cybertanks yet well-suited to policing and counter-insurgency operations. They also look very impressive when parading down a street, and don’t mess up the road to the same extent that heavy tanks do. Most important, like all cybershells, they reliably obey orders.

Tactically, battleshells like the Pickett remain controversial. An American armor colonel described them as “just big enough to be worth shooting with a tank, but too big to hide worth a damn.” While the Pickett is an old design (some 60 years obsolete), even modern models like the U.S. Army’s M404 Taylor are no match for a cybertank. However, they are cheaper than tanks, less vulnerable to anti-armor weapons than smaller cybershells, and most importantly, light enough to be easily air-deployable. However, during the Pacific War, there were several instances in which battleshells suffered badly when sent against even less advanced tank formations.

Its weapon mount typically has either a 20 kJ tactical laser or 15mm Emag cannon (see *Transhuman Space: Changing Times*, p. 62) plus a battle rifle for anti-personal work. The tactical laser or emag is also capable of acting as a point defense weapon, shooting down incoming missiles, although obviously it can’t fire offensively while doing so.

Although it serves in the Honduran Army, the Pickett is not a TSA design, but rather is U.S. Army battlefield robot introduced in 2038. It served with distinction in the Andes War and was one of the first armed combat units to operate under autonomous NAI control. Red Sword captured several damaged Picketts during the U.S. military’s operations in Peru, and they were traded by the regime to other countries in exchange for military aid. The battleshell’s strengths and weaknesses have long since become common knowledge. From 2065 through 2080 copies of the Pickett were even manufactured illegally by the TSA in Peru with Thai assistance, as the I-7

Salamandra and (under license) by companies in Mexico, and India. The U.S. government also provided a few hundred as part of military assistance packages to allied governments in South and Central America, notably Ecuador, Panama, and (before they went nanosocialist) Honduras and Guatemala. Spare parts and second-hand or converted Picketts are quite common on the global arms market, often available for as little as 10% of the original price, though their operating condition varies.

Most of the Picketts in Honduras are thus of American vintage, but many have been modified with logistic supports and replacements from “clones” provided by Peru. In northern Honduras, they have been effective in the counter-insurgency role, especially in rural areas, though several were destroyed by rebel anti-armor weapons and kamikaze attacks by cybershell bombs during fierce street fighting in Puerto Cortes.

**Attribute Modifiers:** ST+20 (Size -20%) [160]; HT+1 [10].

**Secondary Characteristic Modifiers:** SM +2.

**Advantages:** Absolute Direction [5]; Chameleon 2 (Extended, Infrared, +20%) [12]; Damage Resistance 150 (Laminate, +10%; Directional, Front, -20%; Can’t Wear Armor, -40%) [375]; Damage Resistance 100 (Laminate, +10%; Can’t Wear Armor, -40%) [350]; Doesn’t Breathe (Oxygen Combustion, -50%) [10]; Enhanced Move 2 (Ground) [40]; two Extra Arms (Weapon Mount, -80%) [4]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Infravision [10]; Machine [25]; Noisy [-2]; Payload 3 [3]; Protected Sense (Vision) [5]; Radiation Tolerance 5 [10]; Reduced Consumption 3 (Refuel every 10 hours) [2]; Resistant to Electrical Pulses and Surges (+3) [1]; Sealed [15]; Telecommunication (Cable Jack; Video, +40%) [7]; Telecommunication (Laser Communication) [15]; Telecommunication (Radio; Secure, +20%; Video, +40%) [16]; Telescopic Vision 3 [15]; Temperature Tolerance 5 [5].

**Perk:** Accessory (IFF transponder); Accessory (Microframe Computer). [2]

**Disadvantages:** Cybershell Body [-15]; Maintenance (Electronics Repair and Mechanic skills, 2 people, Weekly) [-10]; No Legs (Tracked) [-20]; No Manipulators [-50]; Numb [-20]; Restricted Diet (Common, diesel fuel) [-20]; Social Stigma (Monster) [-15].

**Date:** 2038.

**Cost:** \$451,250 new (\$122,000 or so second-hand).

## VENGADOR

This is another Mexican tactical design that was exported to Honduras before it went nanosocialist. It is an all-terrain, eight-ton, tactical wheeled, four-wheel-drive vehicle that serves in a variety of roles, principally as a light APC.

### Vengador Table

Terms and notation are as defined in *Vehicle Statistics* (pp. B462-463).

#### DRIVING (AUTOMOBILE)/TL8

TL	Vehicle	ST/HP	Hnd/SR	HT	Move	LWt	Load	SM	Occ	DR	Range	Cost	Loc.
8	Vengador	100	0/5	12	2/40	8	1	+4	2+8	50*	250	\$60,000	4WX

\* Front and side armor is laminate. V-hull design provides DR 75 from beneath.

*The beleaguered regime . . . promises a return to democracy by 2102 if the uprising is successfully defeated.*  
– *Transhuman Space: Broken Dreams*

This inexpensive tactical vehicle is equipped with a ceramic diesel engine and composite armor, with room for up to six passengers, who exit from a rear ramp. An interface system allows the vehicle's small computer to run controlling AI software, usually a NAI. It has a secure long-range communicator, low-light night vision for driver and commander, and GPS navigation. It is equipped with a remote-control stabilized external mount with a 4x infrared sighting system (+2 Acc) and integral laser rangefinder (+3 Acc), plus provision for a weapon of up to 100 lbs., such as a missile launcher, autocannon, mortar, etc. For budgetary reasons, most of those used by the Honduran Army are simply armed with an old reliable .50 machine gun.

*Variants:* One in six Honduran Vengadors vehicles are equipped as information-warfare and cybershell-control vehicles for control and maintenance of UAVs in the field. These add a bank of additional terminals and comm systems, including several laser and radio communicators.

## ZEPEDISTAS

The Zepedistas are a militant anti-nanosocialist revolutionary organization named for Carlos Zepeda, an anti-nanosocialist opposition leader and former defense minister who refused to recognize the legitimacy of the 2090 elections. After supporting a failed military coup, Zepeda was arrested. His party, the Honduran Freedom Alliance, was declared illegal, and a state of emergency was enacted. The Honduran government initially planned to try Zepeda as a criminal. However, after the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court was assassinated by a bombbot, the Honduran president, Dania Salgado, made the controversial decision to have Zepeda and several other senior political detainees renditioned out of the country. Zepeda and company are believed to be incarcerated in a secret TSA prison, probably in Peru. This failed to cow the Zepedistas, who have taken up the banner of armed revolt, with covert support arriving for them from both the United States and China. The current leader of the guerrilla movement is his deputy, the CIA-trained "General" Ramon Berna and his deputy Luis Rivera.

The political strength of the Zepedistas lies mainly in the mountainous and heavily forested northwest, as well as in the large port city of Puerto Cortes, where U.S. hostility and the WTO embargo has badly harmed the economy. The Zepedistas are outnumbered by the loyalist Honduran Army and their Guatemalan allies, but thanks to the support of the United States, they have access to a higher standard of weaponry and, in particular, electronic warfare equipment than their government opponents.

The Zepedistas maintain a distributed and highly networked "Third Wave" military organization divided into some 20 "com-mando" cells. They also have secure communications using low-orbit nanosatellite swarms and a great deal of military software (it being easier to smuggle into the country), allowing them to upgrade commercial cybershells to SAI standards.

### *Black Fog (Negro Niebla)*

This new tactical unit of the Zepedistas guerrillas has been ambushing Honduran Army patrols and engaging in terror raids on government and loyalist civilian areas and the disappearance of government supporters in rural areas. The guerrillas are equipped with Fourth or Fifth Wave gear, including full nanoweave armor with chameleon and IR cloaking, microbot swarms, and tactical mini-missiles. Some reports suggest the unit has CIA or U.S. Army combat bioroids and Jungle RATS cybershells (see *Transhuman Space: Shell Tech*, pp. 18-19), though this has not been confirmed.

## Montero

186 points

Some of the first walking cybershells were just designed to help light infantry hump their gear across rugged terrain, with the United States operating the first examples in the second decade of the 21st century. This is a similar model: an old but reliable six-legged Mexican design, intended to serve as a "robot mule" providing extra lifting and transport capabilities. It is rugged, lightly armored, and easy to maintain in simple workshops, and powered by a rugged ceramic diesel engine. Its "arm" is a single trunk attached to the head. The Montero is actually used by the Army *and* the guerrillas, the latter having captured some and received others as military assistance from Mexican Army stocks.

**Attribute Modifiers:** ST+10 (Size, -10%) [90]; DX-1 [-20]; HT+2 [20].

**Secondary Characteristic Modifiers:** SM +1.

**Advantages:** Damage Resistance 30 (Can't Wear Armor, -40%) [90]; Doesn't Breathe (Oxygen Consumption, -50%) [10]; Extra Legs (6 legs) [10]; Infravision [10]; Machine [25]; Telecommunication (Cable Jack; Video, +40%) [7]; Telecommunication (Infrared Communication) [10]; Telecommunication (Radio; Video, +40%; Secure +20%) [16]; Temperature Tolerance 2 [2].

**Perks:** Accessory (Small Computer). [1]

**Disadvantages:** Bad Grip [-5]; Colorblindness [-10]; Cybershell Body [-15]; Horizontal [-10]; No Sense of Smell/Taste [-5]; One Arm [-20]; Restricted Diet (Common, diesel fuel) [-20].

**Features:** Individuals of the same model closely resemble each other.

**Date:** 2041 design. **Cost:** \$34,596 (new).

## ADVENTURE SEEDS

*The Kidnapped Star:* Pham Toc Anh, age 20, is the lead singer in a popular v-pop group visiting from Vietnam on a good-will tour aimed at raising awareness of Honduras' civil war among other TSA nations. She and her entourage took an ill-advised side trip to visit the millennia-old Mayan ruins of Copán, a few miles from the Guatemalan border. There she was ambushed by Zepedista guerrillas, who believed she was a spy for the TSA's intelligence directorate. Actually, she is just a super popular slinky star who also happens to be the daughter of a high-ranking member of the TSA's Innovation Directorate. They have requested the Honduran government do everything they can to rescue her before she comes to any harm. Naturally, the guerrillas wish to hang onto her, perhaps in the hope of trading her for captured Zepedistas.

*The Tanker Truck:* The CIA wishes to covertly reinforce the rebels in a big way by smuggling in an entire platoon of modern cybershells. A tanker truck full of military-grade cannibal microbots has been "diverted" from a Nanodynamics factory. Disguised as a shipment of Vermont maple syrup for a breakfast cereal company in Honduras, it contains some 150 square yards' worth (300 lbs.) of cannibal nano on a tanker truck. The microbots are programmed to eat whatever they can find (probably old cars, but if necessary, the truck itself) to create a unit of a dozen or so Darwin-Sogo RATS (they're using foreign Pacific Rim Alliance designs to avoid compromising U.S. military systems). What the CIA needs, however, is some reliable dupes who don't look "Agency" to drive the truck from Vermont to Honduras, through various TSA border checkpoints,

perhaps thinking they are smuggling something less lethal into the country . . . maybe even on behalf of criminals or nanosocialists.

*Arms Shipment:* A cargo ship carrying a weapons shipment – spare parts for the Picketts acquired from obsolete stocks in Bangladesh – is due to arrive at Puerto Corte. The Zepedistas would like to stop it arriving, ideally before it even gets into port, but their CIA contacts are wary of escalating the situation by having the U.S. Navy attack a ship on the high seas. Perhaps some mercenaries would like a chance to function as modern-day pirates?

*In Honduras, they had a sham democracy. It was run by elites, what was called a liberal democracy, but in reality was a false democracy.*

– Hugo Chavez

## ABOUT THE COLUMNIST

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

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# INDENTURES INC.

BY J. EDWARD TREMLETT

*"Has the promise of this new space age left you behind?*

*"Are you underemployed, or out of work? Do you having trouble paying your bills?*

*"Are you worried about the future of your parents or your children?*

*"Would you like to make a fresh start, or are you looking for a way to secure your future?*

*"If you're a young person in reasonably good health and with a good record, Indentures Inc. has a solution for you. Give us your body for a few years, to send out on a contract, and in return, you will be well paid for your time.*

*"Your room and board will be provided. If you have family, we'll look after them, and pay them a share of your salary every month, or we'll give you your entire earnings at the end of your contract. You won't even need any skills or special training; we'll give them to you.*

*"If you need help, let's help each other. Come visit one of our recruiting centers, and see for yourself what we have to offer.*

*"Indentures Incorporated. It'll be the best sleep you've ever had."*

On the surface, what Indentures Inc. is offering sounds like a great deal. You give up a few years of your life that you might either be slaving or starving, and in return you sleep away a grueling, near-mindless job – most likely in outer space – and wake up with a very large payout waiting for you. All that and a free brain implant!

Of course, that's on the surface. Beneath it are allegations of the sloppy and inhumane handling of the Indentured, and rumors that those who come home aren't quite the same again. There's also talk of companies taking their "zombies" out and making them do truly dangerous work – even military actions – that the Indentures clearly didn't contract for.

What seems like a good deal might actually be death and disaster waiting to happen.

The history and current status of Indentures Inc. – a rising corporation in the *Transhuman Space* setting – is now revealed. Additionally, get unsavory hints of what the company might really be up to and how it could negatively affect a PC – either now or in the past.

## TALK OF THE FUTURE

Indentures Inc. came together midway through the economic boom created when the routine implantation of virtual interface computer brain implants – often called "the Wire" – was finally perfected.

The corporation that marketed the Wire – Nanodynamics – filed millions of patents to ensure that they got as much of the resulting market share as they could. Meanwhile, hundreds of

startup companies were created to sell supplemental applications to personal and corporate markets.

One application that still hadn't been adequately exploited was the notion of Puppeteering: remotely controlling someone else's body via their Wire. Puppeteering had a lot of potential – "online expert" ventures could let a person to call up a specialist in their field, and allow that expert to temporarily take over the requester's body, so as to perform highly intricate tasks. Also, emergency responders could let a more-qualified person operate them by remote if a dire situation needed fixing *now*, such as immediate surgery to save a life, or extreme expertise to defuse a bomb.

Unfortunately, most people were extremely hesitant to let someone else into their bodies, even for a short while. At the very least it felt weird. For many, it felt like a severe violation. There were also legitimate fears of being "bodyhacked," taken over by malicious people, rogue AIs, or tyrannical governments.

These fears struck a deathblow to the numerous startups that had banked on getting exclusive Wire and Puppet package contracts. However, one company decided to maintain its holds on its Puppeteer patents, just in case things turned around.

## WE WANT YOUR BODY

At that time, space exploration was advancing rapidly. Such endeavors not only required large amounts of money, but large numbers of highly skilled, very motivated workers, ones willing to leave the comforts of Earth, live and toil in substandard environments, and be exposed to deadly danger every time they suited up. Even when these nations' hypothetical far-flung colonies and space stations were established, they'd still need people willing to work in them for years at a time.

Rich and powerful Fifth Wave countries had no problems finding massive numbers of hardy, well-trained pioneers, but other nations weren't as fortunate. Many had the money and desire to commit to the endeavor, but did not have the teeming masses of educated and dedicated labor they needed to pull it off. They might have been able to train their working poor to put a station around Mars, but good luck getting them to go there to build it, much less do a five-year tour!

For a time, the bioroid industry stepped in to fill these nations' gaps between desire and ability. However, once public and political opinion began to turn against their commercial manufacture, and the European Union started using military force against bioroid traffickers, the problem came back. Worse, a number of those nations and corporations currently had stations and outposts under construction, or being staffed almost-exclusively *by* bioroids; these ventures would either have to be finished or manned by humans, or else abandoned.

Thankfully, there was a solution. The company that had maintained its Puppet programs, now calling itself Indentures Inc., stepped into the void that the bioroid controversy had created. They promised their clients a unique solution to the problems of employee skill, comfort, and dedication through the implantation of their patented Puppet Program Package (P<sup>3</sup>).

With the P<sup>3</sup> module, companies could put a Puppeteering Artificial Intelligence into their otherwise-unskilled and unmotivated workers. The program would control their employees' every movement and response, while leaving the workers' actual minds in a dreamlike trance, with short, yearly "wake up" periods to evaluate their mental state. The program would run for a certain, allotted amount of time, and then be removed without any harm to the workers' brains or psyches.

Their first major contract was with Bhala Aerospace. Through the use of Indentures Inc.'s technology, they were able to offer their impoverished but otherwise-healthy would-be workers a magnificent deal. The workers would let the company use their bodies for five years. In exchange their immediate family – wives and children if married, parents if not – would be housed and looked after by the company. They would be given an excellent salary, which would either be handed over to their family on a monthly basis, or deposited into an account for withdrawal when they ended the contract. They also got to keep the Wire afterward, as something of a going-away present, though the company's programs would be removed – both for their safety and the company's security.

## Parts Is Parts

"The Wire" is a virtual interface implant (*Transhuman Space*, p. 64), which forms the backbone for most neural cybernetics in this setting. It's quite common in Fifth Wave societies, but a massive luxury to those living in lousy conditions in poor countries, or in places where the gap between rich and poor is almost an Astronomical Unit wide.

The P<sup>3</sup> is essentially an Exotic Implant (*Transhuman Space*, p. 65), and could best be described as a Puppet Implant coupled with a Personality Implant (*GURPS Ultra-Tech*, p. 218). It's either installed alone, or added on to whatever brain implants the character may have.

When the contract is over, and the employee leaves Indentures Inc., the AI and Puppeteering part of the P<sup>3</sup> module is removed, though the Virtual Interface Implant is left behind. In some cases, slight traces of the other two parts of the module may remain behind and cause problems.

Such a deal proved very attractive to young men and women who needed the money, but lacked the skills, aptitudes, and/or nerve to engage in such labor. Within a month, Bhala had a fully trained, totally committed workforce. Within two years, they had a working space station. By the time the first wave of their workers' contracts was ending, they had broken ground on Mahala 1, in the middle of the Sea of Tranquility, and were already gearing up for even more ambitious projects.

With Bhala's successes as testament to what the P<sup>3</sup> could do, Indentures Inc. quickly gained many clients in many different countries, requiring swift and sometimes reckless expansion. They also had many would-be competitors trying to find

out exactly how their P<sup>3</sup> modules worked, which led to increased paranoia, a tightening of internal security, and a drastic change in their corporate culture.

## BEHIND THIS PUBLIC MACHINE

Indentures Inc. is a corporate juggernaut that has its fingers into many aerospace industries. It is massively wealthy and extremely powerful, but prone to corruption at its lower levels, and not a lot of fun to work for. Industry watchers sing its praises in public, but are quite aware that it might take only a few flashy scandals to bring the authorities into the company's darker corners.

To its clients, Indentures Inc. bills itself as the ultimate in cost-effective staffing solutions. Companies no longer have to find and recruit suitable employees from a narrowing pool of skilled and committed laborers, and then dedicate a considerable amount of time training them, only to spend exorbitant amounts making sure they're well-fed and adequately compensated, as well as rested, entertained, and happy. Instead, they can have perfect, already-trained employees that can work long days, subsist on basic nutrients, and do their jobs with no grumbling or need for recreation. They're cheaper than cyber-shells, more legal than bioroids, won't unionize or strike, and don't always need to be paid on a monthly basis.

To its potential employees, and their governments, the company bills itself as a champion of compassionate capitalism. It offers people who would otherwise be left behind in the great economic adventure of these times a chance to make good money without extensive training, abilities, or ambition. By renting their bodies to the company, and losing a few years of conscious life, they end up with either the security of knowing their families are being well taken care of in their absence, or the promise of a large lump sum of money – and a free Wire – once their time is done.

Sure there are risks, and who wants to wake up five or seven years older? But the promise of "the best-paying sleep you'll ever have" lures enough people to Indentures Inc.'s recruitment stations to keep them very busy. The stations in Soweto, New Delhi, and Los Angeles have wraparound lines around the clock.

The recruitment stations require three visits to fully process applicants. The first visit involves submitting to an ID check, handing over a recent physical, and having a fasting blood sample drawn. Those in poor health, or with medical conditions that require constant monitoring, are turned down on the spot. Those with criminal backgrounds, famous relatives, or infamous family histories are disappointed via an automated phone call and form letter.

Those who've passed the first step must return for an in-depth company physical and psychological evaluation. Technicians test for brain function and neural integrity, and ensure that the applicant can handle the mental strain of being "asleep" for years at a time. Those who pass are invited back for a third visit, which involves a counselor and recruiter performing a final interview to make certain the applicant knows what will happen, accepts the medical and occupational risks, and is a "good fit" for Indentures Inc.

Usually, the third visit is a formality, but it's a good chance to tie down any fine details or make certain there are no problems the other two visits didn't uncover. Indentures Inc. will not tell the applicants what company they're going to be contracted out to, but if they're worried about certain risks – such as those that come from working in deep space – they can always take some time to think it over.

Applicants who sign the contract get up to three days to say good-bye to friends and family, and get their financial affairs in order. They then go to a corporate surgery to have the P<sup>3</sup> Module inserted, and be put into dreaming. They won't be told where they're going before the procedure, although a company has already contracted their services, and the company- and job-specific AI program will be inserted along with the P<sup>3</sup>.

Once they've recovered from surgery – usually two to three days – they are cleaned and groomed, put into their new uniforms, and sent off to work. The average Indentured works 16 hours a day. They get short breaks for meals and biological functions, and rest for eight hours. When they start their rest period, their modules are synched with their AI to ensure they are working within parameters.

Once a year, they are brought out of dreaming, talked to for an hour, and given a psychological evaluation to ensure they're doing fine. Even a hint of serious deviation in the psychological

exam is cause for termination of contract. In such cases, the Indentured will be sent back to Earth, woken up, given the money he'd earned thus far, and released from service.

Buried within the contract with Indentures Inc. is the fact that the physical well-being of the Indentured is completely up to the contracting company. The AIs are programmed to stop all but the most important work if a serious injury occurs, and report for medical attention. But smaller injuries that may turn serious are often overlooked, so, ideally, they should be checked for injuries that may turn serious at the end of every shift, and scanned for illnesses once a week.

In reality, however, sometimes months go by before such checks are made, and medical care may be slipshod. It's not uncommon for an Indentured to wake up and find out he now has a prosthetic hand, and have no way of knowing that the doctor had to amputate due to negligence. Successfully suing a Contractor for such things is very difficult, due to all the fine print and red tape in the contract, but it's not unheard of.

Dead Indentured are usually spaced or cremated with no ceremony, and their families aren't always informed in a timely manner. Their families or survivors receive the money they had earned, plus an allotted amount for grief and suffering; they're also given three months to vacate the premises if they were living in a company town (see *Indentured Acres*, p. 26).

## Legal Indentures and Technical Briefs

At this time, Indentured servitude occupies a legal grey area; it's mostly thanks to Indentures Inc., and their competitors, that it's become permissible – if questionable – once more.

The general take on it is that, so long as there is no coercion, the Indentured know what kind of work they may be volunteering for, and Indentures Inc. and their Contractors treat their employees with dignity and respect, the law has no reason to intervene. Some governments see it differently, and prohibit Indentures Inc. from operating on their soil, but that doesn't stop the truly desperate from making the trip to a nearby country.

There has been some indication that the European Union is looking into the matter. However, as they currently have their hands full dealing with bioroid trafficking, it may be decades before this becomes an issue. At least, that's what Indentures Inc. assures its clients

Indentures Inc. claims that they won't take on employees with spotty legal records or fugitives. However, it's not unknown for people to purchase excellent, in-depth fake credentials, and use Indentures Inc. to escape the police, angry creditors, or worse. It's also not unknown for less than scrupulous employees of Indentures Inc. to help such persons with their flight, for a fee. In fact, the lower levels of the company are riddled with people who are willing to take bribes to get otherwise-unsuitable candidates past the crucial first two visits to the recruitment office, and coach them on how to answer the interviewers in the third.

It's also possible for people to purchase Wires that come pre-loaded with software that will "crack" the P<sup>3</sup>. These allow the purchaser to absorb the AI's information, but

regard its instructions as suggestions. More sophisticated ones will also defeat the AI's tracking subroutines, allowing the ersatz Indentured to go where he pleases, and not have his whereabouts relayed back to the central control.

Contractors are supposed to send their Indentured to a certain place, to do a certain thing for a certain amount of time. Once the Indentures leave the company's custody, they have to rely on the Contractors' good word that the monthly status reports they receive are genuine.

There are stories of companies working Indentures around the clock, exposing them to harsh environments in shoddy protective gear, and using some of the more comely ones as pleasure drones. There are also rumors that some of the more cutthroat corporations are using them as disposable, programmable assassins in actions against their rivals, and then just claiming they were spaced by accident.

Indentures Inc. does *not* follow up in person unless they're 100% sure something is wrong, as they don't want to lose valuable clients to their competitors. Competitors such as Outreachers and Pyongyang Indentures Ltd. are always on the lookout for the company's hassled clients, and are instantly ready to make them an offer. These companies care even less about the welfare of their "product," so long as money is made.

Complaints from grieving relatives, along with the occasional muckraking investigation, have led various law-enforcement agencies to start taking a closer look at the situation. The problem is that it's a large solar system, and it's quite a doing to send agents in for a surprise investigation. It's even more of a doing to get the authorities to send in a spy, much less send him out to Saturn.

Maimed Indentured are supposed to be sent home to Earth, paid in full, and compensated for their loss, but some companies just toss them out the airlock with the dead rather than pay extra.

Once the contract is over, Indentures are sent back to Earth to have their P<sup>3</sup> removed, though the Wire remains as a “thank you.” (That and they’re very difficult to extract, once in the brain.)

They then wake up, undergo a post-contract physical and psychological exam, and are debriefed. This consists of a real meal, and being told what they were doing and for whom, and how much money they made after taxes. (Except for the money, the information may not be entirely true.)

If they’re still in good shape, and seem open to the idea, they may be offered another contract. Those who say yes are treated to a three months’ vacation package on the company’s dime, then brought back, given a new P<sup>3</sup>, and sent away. Under no circumstances will Indentures Inc. keep someone Indentured for more than 10 years total, and if they say “no” at the debriefing, they can’t change their mind later.

More-sinister allegations have arisen. Every major corporation tends to have them, but Indentures Inc. has some very unique and grandiose ones, given the nature of what they do.

Rumors circulate that people who have been Indentured do not have *all* their programming removed, and could be reactivated remotely by the company if they wished. Some rogue hackers have supposedly proven this by broadcasting a command to dance throughout Mombasa, and recording footage of the formerly Indentured dancing in place like fools, but the company has dismissed this “demonstration” as a prank. They have also dismissed all claims of Indentured people acting like zombies, spontaneously developing hiveminds, behaving like pack animals, or quietly organizing the takeover and scuttling of the company’s primary competitors.

Equally scurrilous are claims that they’re laying the groundwork for the takeover of the solar system by giving the hypothetical alien invaders a ready-made army. Surely it must take a diseased mind – no doubt from one of their less-successful competitors – to come up with that kind of utter nonsense!

## Indentured Acres

In some countries, Indentures Inc. offers housing to one’s immediate family for the duration of the Indentures’ contract. Such “company towns” tend to be located in close clusters of drab apartment towers in the worst parts of a city. A company store sells off-brand food and goods at discounted prices, and basic needs are met, but not by much.

In most cases, the families of those who’ve begun work at the same time, and most likely on the same project, are deliberately kept as far apart from each other as possible. This is done to keep them from comparing what little notes they have, or possibly rioting if a true disaster occurs and an entire Contract is lost to an industrial accident.

The atmosphere in these blocks is a mixture of stagnation, waiting, and hope, occasionally dashed by the arrival of a company counselor to tell someone their spouse or child died. Absent the ability to send information back and forth, the Indentures’ families can only husband their monthly salary, save for the future, and dream of the day their loved ones return from their long, profitable sleep.

Returned Indentures face the challenge of reintegrating into a world that’s moved on while they’ve stayed still. Their families are older, their friends and loved ones may have moved on, and their children may consider them strangers. The money they received will most likely be considerable, but it may not bring them the financial security they were promised – especially if they go crazy and live it up to celebrate their return.

In addition to social difficulties, they may also suffer residual psychological effects. Many occasionally have strange flashbacks of what they were doing, or find that the dreams they had for a year at a time are infringing on their conscious lives as illusions or daymares. Others find themselves lost without constant input or supervision, or try to sleep the day away, finding refuge in the dreams they were wrapped in for so long. Some turn to narcotics, or escape into near-constant VR to fill the void.

## YOU’LL BE WELL LOOKED AFTER

As written, Indentures Inc. is meant to be plugged into a *Transhuman Space* campaign, but it could also be slipped into any science fiction campaign where brain implant technology is well-established for civilian populations, with many consumer products available for the Wired. The procedure itself is a moderately expensive outpatient surgery that is considered routine, but still carries some risk.

The company and its questionable business practices can be a well-established part of the corporate background. Their ads might appear everywhere in more impoverished areas, and lines could stretch around the block from their recruitment and evaluation centers. Mainstream financial shows might talk up their wealth and rising stocks, and underground publications may whisper about dark but barely provable suspicions of unseemly corporate behavior. Maybe a major scandal will appear on the news someday . . .

Indentures Inc. may also form a bit of the PCs’ background, and could be a reason for some of their Disadvantages. Did they indenture themselves to the company to pay debts or get started in life? If they went through with it, what shape were they in when they returned? Do they suffer nightmares, or have weird memories of that time? Do they have dependencies, disorders, or social problems that stem from having been Indentured?

Time with that company may also impact their lives in more immediate ways. Family members or friends might go out on a contract and not come back, leading the PC to try to discover what happened. They may come across old video footage of themselves, working for their Contractor, but not doing what they expected to see themselves do. Worse, people they inadvertently hurt while being Puppeteered may come after them to gain revenge.

## Indentured Like Me

A large number of fatal accidents are taking place on Bucephalus, a station being assembled in Mars' orbit by Lagrange Solutions using Indentures Inc.'s services for labor. The local authorities are satisfied that this is just bad luck, but word has it that Lagrange – notorious for cutting corners – is paying them off to look the other way while their Indentured are exposed to unnecessary risks.

To investigate, the characters are going to go undercover with cracked P<sup>3</sup>s. They will be fully conscious during their time with Lagrange, and everything they see and experience will be recorded by slinkies, to be uploaded once they return.

Can they discover what's really going on at Phobos-4 without being discovered? Any weird comings and goings will doubtlessly be noticed, and reported, by the AI they're carrying, and they'll be found out immediately if they scramble for cover when an accident happens. If that happens, the company might not hesitate to flush them out the airlock.

*How can I know that and  
not know who I am?*

– Jason Bourne,  
in *The Bourne Identity*

## Running Down the Snake

Jorge-Julio X. H. Guadalupe-Rodriguez, a truly masterful information thief known as “La Culebra” (The Snake), was wanted by just about every major law enforcement outfit in the world for his many and daring cybernetic crimes. No one believed that he'd really met his end when his stolen LEO vehicle crashed into a derelict Russian space platform at the end of

a three continents' airspace rundown. But with no real body to retrieve, who could say for certain?

Two years later, Interpol has discovered the truth: Jorge-Julio was never on that runaway shuttle, but getting a cracked P<sup>3</sup> module in Calcutta, courtesy of a bent Indentures Inc. employee. “Hector G. Peron” was indentured to Cachot Rouge for seven years and sent to Waystation-1, a refueling, recreation, and repairs station in orbit around Jupiter, staffed by 150 – most of them Indentured. According to the employee, Jorge-Julio's plan was to wait there for the heat to die down, and then make his way back to Earth.

Interpol has decided to quietly send the PCs in on a Luna-to-Calisto freighter that's scheduled to dock with Waystation-1 on the way. Once there, they are to find and detain him, and then take him back to Earth for arraignment for his many crimes. But can they complete their mission with no assistance, no weapons, and no idea how many traps or tricks Jorge-Julio has been secretly putting into place for the last two years?

## The Station Is Dark

The PCs are passengers on a standard Earth-Mars run, but their ship has encountered severe engine problems. Fortunately, one of the shuttle company's waystations is close by, so they can dock, fix the engines, and continue on.

However, when the ship gets closer, the station fails to return their hails. Luckily, the docks are automatic, and the ship has no problem making linkup, but no one comes out to greet them when they disembark. No one's answering the internal communications, and their own communicators aren't functioning, either.

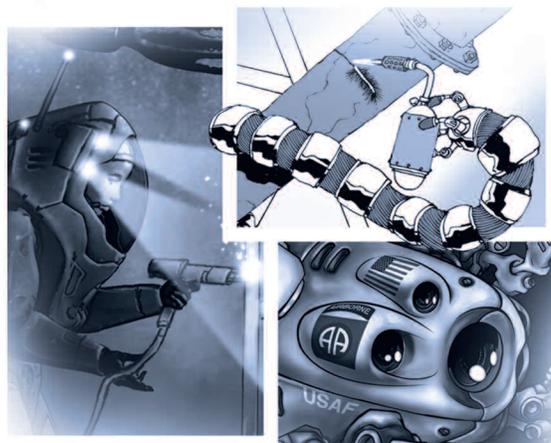
As the protagonists explore, they find the crew are nowhere to be found, and five of the 30 Indentured are unaccounted for. The control center is deserted, the galley hasn't been used recently, and the crew quarters are jammed with 25 zoned-out Indentured who haven't been working for some time. It also looks like a massive, bloody fight broke out in the recreation room.

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## Recommended Uploading

The following stories, movies, and graphic novels involve questions of identity, the dangers of memory loss, and cultures or organizations whose commerce is derived, at least in part, on personality/memory implantations. They may provide inspiration in designing a scenario or campaign involving Indentures Inc. They might also be helpful for players who want their characters to have been damaged or complicated by their time with that company.

*Angel Heart.* This 1987 movie was directed by Alan Parker.

*Blade Runner.* This 1982 movie was directed by Ridley Scott.

*The Bourne Identity.* Several variations exist, including the 1980 novel by Robert Ludlum, the 1988 movie directed by Roger Young, and the 2002 movie directed by Doug Liman.

*Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* The 1968 novel by Philip K. Dick was the basis for *Blade Runner*.

*Dollhouse.* The TV series created by Joss Whedon ran from 2009 to 2010.

*Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind.* This 2004 movie was directed by Michel Gondry.

*Fight Club.* The 1996 novel by Chuck Palahniuk was the inspiration for the 1999 movie directed by David Fincher.

*The Filth.* This 2004 DC Comics trade paperback was written by Grant Morrison and illustrated by Chris Weston and Gary Erskine.

*The Final Cut.* This 2004 movie was directed by Omar Naim.

*Gamer.* This 2009 movie was directed by Mark Neveldine and Brian Taylor.

*Hardwired.* This 2009 movie was directed by Ernie Barbarash.

*Impostor.* The 2001 movie directed by Gary Fleder was inspired by the 1953 short story by Philip K. Dick.

*The Island.* This 2005 movie was directed by Michael Bay.

*Lost Highway.* This 1997 movie was directed by David Lynch.

*Memento.* This 2000 movie was directed by Christopher Nolan.

*Paycheck.* The 2003 movie directed by John Woo was inspired by the 1952 short story by Philip K. Dick.

*A Scanner Darkly.* The 2006 movie directed by Richard Linklater was inspired by the 1977 novel by Philip K. Dick.

*Total Recall.* The 1990 movie was directed by Paul Verhoeven, the 2012 movie was directed by Len Wiseman, and the 1999 TV series was created by Art Monterastelli.

*We Can Remember It for You Wholesale.* The 1966 short story by Philip K. Dick was the basis for *Total Recall*.

What happened, here? The logs were wiped, but the hidden backups reveal that, three weeks ago, the external and internal communications stopped working, and two members of the crew were found strangled. The station's commander's last message indicates that she thinks some of the Indentured have been reprogrammed to kill; she and the remaining crew planned to send a distress signal, hole up in the recreation room, and wait for aid. Obviously, this did not work so well.

Eventually, the investigators might discover that a rival company sent a saboteur, posing as a traveler, to upgrade some of the Indentured with assassin AIs. They destroyed the internal communications network, installed a communications scrambler outside the station, and killed the crew. Now they plan to kill the characters, load their bodies onto their ship, and send it on a collision course with the company's Mars station. In doing so, they will cripple the company's Mars operations, and make it look like an accident.

Now the killer Indentured are watching the PCs bumble around, and occasionally disappearing an NPC or two when the opportunity presents itself. They are silent, sneaky, methodical, and uncaring about their own well-being. They are also prepared to reprogram the rest of the Indentured if they need extra assassins.

Can the heroes dodge the killer Indentured long enough to repair their ship and get out of there? Will they recognize that the killers are also victims, and try to wake them all up? Failing that, can they find a way to at least warn the company, and the authorities, what's happened here, before they join the station crew in cold, vacuum-sealed death?

### Breach of Contract

When the PCs signed up with Rand-Temujin, they agreed to do seven years of manual labor at Mimas Station 3, by Saturn. But now they have woken up to the sound of alarms, in a metal room that, judging from the warning signs on the walls, is somewhere underwater. Loud announcements warn of a hull breach and an attack, and tell all crew to repel boarders.

The protagonists realize that they are wearing black stealth suits, and carrying guns, knives, explosives, and sabotage equipment.

The characters do not know when it is, or where they are. They do not have access to any of the skills or information that their P<sup>3</sup> module would have given them. They can only rely on what they knew and could do *before* they woke up, and that may not be of any help when the hull breaks, the crew of this ship starts shooting at them, or their fellow Puppets

– elsewhere in the ship – realize they've lost their programming, and try and kill them, too.

Can they find out what's happened to them, and either stop the conflict or survive it long enough to escape? Is there anywhere to escape *to*, or was this a suicide mission with no return option?

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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

# ELOI GAMES

BY WILLIAM H. STODDARD

From footloose adventurers in dungeons to street samurai in cyberspace, player characters commonly live on the margins of their societies, with few ties and uncertain resources. *Transhuman Space* certainly has room for such people, on Silas Duncan Station, on Ceres, in the Martian Triads, or in the failed states of Earth. A campaign can explore most of the themes of classic cyberpunk.

But the world of *Transhuman Space* is a fabulously wealthy one, with many people who have no need to struggle for survival. Much of the population of Fifth Wave nations is made up of Eloi: people who can live off their investments, doing no work that doesn't personally gratify them. They are something akin to an aristocracy, but an extraordinarily large one, making up some 30% of the population of Fifth Wave nations.

Eloi can be a valuable resource for a *Transhuman Space* campaign, as Contacts, Patrons, or perhaps Enemies – or as clients seeking to hire unusual services from unusual agents. Or they can be the central figures in such a campaign. Whether they seek traditional sorts of adventure for unusual reasons, or enter into more rarefied struggles and conflicts, they provide a unique viewpoint on their world, and some special options for roles to play in it.

## BEING ELOI

Retirement, in the 20th-century sense, has been forgotten in Fifth Wave nations. With enhanced longevity, there is no set age at which people stop working. Anyone in the professional class – about 30% of the Fifth Wave population – earns enough to accumulate capital. Eventually, the earnings from investing this capital are enough to sustain a high standard of living, without the need to work. In *GURPS* terms, this is a combination of Independent Income, Wealth, and the Status that they support.

How much of these advantages does it take to be Eloi? In *Transhuman Space: Changing Times*, the monthly cost of living for an established Eloi (at Status 4) is \$60,000. But most Eloi living in Wealthy nations, regions, or enclaves, where this is multiplied by 4: \$240,000 a month. With Independent Income 20, it takes Wealth of \$1,200,000 to earn this much. This is 40 times the basic starting wealth of \$30,000, somewhat more than Very Wealthy but a bit short of Filthy Rich. Several combinations of character traits can represent Eloi with higher or lower standing.

*Exceptionally rich and influential Eloi:* Multimillionaire 1 [75], Independent Income 10 [10], and Status 5 [15]; starting wealth \$30,000,000; monthly earnings \$3,000,000.

*Prosperous Eloi:* Filthy Rich [50], Independent Income 20 [20], and Status 4 [15]; starting wealth \$3,000,000; monthly earnings \$600,000.

*Established Eloi:* Filthy Rich [50], Independent Income 10 [10], and Status 4 [15]; starting wealth \$3,000,000; monthly earnings \$300,000.

*Financially stressed Eloi:* Very Wealthy [30], Independent Income 20 [20], and Status 3 [10]; starting wealth \$600,000; monthly earnings \$120,000.

*Marginal Eloi or Eloi hanger-on:* Very Wealthy [30], Independent Income 10 [10], and Status 3 [10]; starting wealth \$600,000; monthly earnings \$60,000.

Based on this, those in an Eloi-centered campaign should spend an average of 75 points on social position, with a range from 50 to 100 points. Add 75 points to the starting point total to allow this. Thus, ordinary citizen Eloi might be built on 125-225 points; adventurer-level Eloi on 225-325 points; high-end Eloi on 325-575 points.

What do Eloi spend their earnings on? *Changing Times* spells out the standards of living for typical Eloi Statuses:

*Status 5:* A mansion or estate and one or two town residences, an executive jet and several lesser vehicles, good permanent Web access, a team of efficient AI and human aides, good medical support, and probably several human or cyber-shell guards.

*Status 4:* A mid-sized mansion, probably a holiday home and a city apartment, an aircar and a couple of smartcars, several infomorph aides with permanent fast Web access and a couple of human assistants, full medical coverage, and good automated security.

*Status 3:* A small mansion, maybe other residences, an aircar and a smartcar, infomorph assistance with permanent fast Web access, probably a human aide, full medical coverage, and automated security.

An important part of this lifestyle, for any Eloi, is having a personal staff. This will *always* include infomorphs with permanent fast Web access; a typical Eloi will have several of them. But the real mark of Eloi standing – and the one that Eloi hangers-on usually can't afford – is having at least one actual human aide. Human aides should be built as Allies; so should most infomorphs, though an infomorph that occupies a static cybershell might be treated as a highly reliable Contact instead. Nearly all human aides will have their own infomorphs, which *do not cost points*, though they are treated as Allies.

Being at the endpoints of successful careers, Eloi will almost always have networks of contacts in multiple nations. At least one or two extra Cultural Familiarities are commonplace. It's typical for an Eloi to speak at least one language at the Accented level; of course, translation software is very good, but relying on it is *déclassé*. In campaigns set in Eloi circles, lack of these abilities may count as an Odi-ous Personal Habit (Insularity) [-5], worth -1 to reactions.

Eloi often also have Claim to Hospitality with several international contacts in their past profession or their current personal interests.

There is a distinctive Code of Honor for most Eloi circles; see p. 33. Eloi who lack this Code of Honor may have a Secret or a negative Reputation.

## WHAT ELOI WANT

What motivates a person who is financially comfortable, and doesn't need to work for a living? What hooks can draw him into a plot?

### *Hobbyists*

Many people of independent means use them to pursue their personal interests. These can be more expensive than parkour or collecting 20th-century film posters! Eloi take up extreme sports, or engage in interplanetary tourism or private exploration. Others practice more culturally significant activities: self-funded scientific research, large-scale amateur art, or creating elaborate virtual realities (which can be either science or art). Small groups of enthusiasts meet to speak Sumerian or Proto-Indo-European, Klingon or Sindarin, or newly invented languages.

Some of these hobbies can be exciting or hazardous! An Eloi campaign might use some future Explorers' Club as its base of operations. The GM might define the members of such a club as a Contact Group. They can also provide invitations to adventurous activities in the traditional style.

### *Climbers*

For many Eloi, their standing among other Eloi is vitally important. This can be tracked more precisely than in previous centuries by reputation networks (discussed in *Transhuman Space: Toxic Memes*). A typical reputation network assigns people scores from -100 to +100; these can be represented in *GURPS* terms as  $\pm 1$  Reputation per  $\pm 25$  points. Reputation networks are much larger than face-to-face communities, and can usually be defined as large groups (for example, "everyone in Singapore" or "all North American Eloi"); a newly established network, or many networks in Fourth Wave regions, could be considered a small group. Given universal Web access, such a Reputation counts as always known.

A Secret worth -5 or -10 points would translate, in part, into -50 or -100 points in a reputation network, if revealed. A quirk-level Secret might be worth -10 points.

Positive points in a reputation network make suitable minor rewards for PCs, especially in a socially focused campaign. A typical award might be +10 points. Such points can actually be earned from any of the Eloi activities this section discusses; gaining reputation is a plausible motive for activities from athletics to disaster relief. But they can also be pursued directly, through such activities as hosting social events, networking, or being seen in fashionable company, with a major social success again granting +10 points.

### *Causes*

Many Eloi look for something beyond their own social network, whether to gain prestige for their social consciousness, or in search of a deeper meaning to life. The world of 2100 still

has many poor people, in Third Wave nations and especially in failed states, as well as its share of disasters, most of which affect poor people worst.

One way to help such people is by raising funds and publicizing causes. But some Eloi prefer more hands-on involvement, often based on their former professions. A retired doctor may treat victims of a plague; a former lawyer may defend political prisoners; an athlete or explorer may get involved in search-and-rescue efforts. Such activities are often dangerous and can make tense adventures. Hosting a recruiter for such a cause can score reputation points – and lure idle Eloi into adventures.

### *Politics*

Some Eloi become active in politics – their wealth, Status, and free time are advantages for starting a political career. For this type of campaign, see *GURPS Social Engineering*. The usual Eloi choice is electoral politics, as candidates or as supporters of new laws. Administrative politics is mainly the domain of the professional classes, though some Eloi are appointed to special offices outside the regular hierarchy.

Eloi are usually doing well enough out of existing institutions to find revolutionary politics unattractive. Nonetheless, devotion to a cause can lead an Eloi over the edge of radical politics. This is seldom "socialist" in the classic sense – with Eloi living on earnings from capital, and professionals striving to accumulate it, a majority of the population are "capitalists" – though it may be nanosocialist, in countries outside the Transpacific Socialist Alliance.

*Happiness seems to require  
a modicum of external prosperity.*

– Aristotle

### *Transformation*

Other, more radical causes attract some Eloi. Cybergnostics, hyperevolutionists, libertarians, nanarchists, and pansapientists all have prominent Eloi supporters. Some such groups aim at transformation of entire societies; others favor creating enclaves of their particular version of "transhumanity" or "posthumanity." Eloi characters may be sought as recruits for such a venture – or have to deal with one that went astray. The old joke about the Singularity being "the rapture of the nerds" no longer sounds all that funny.

### *Transgression*

Radical transformation, in turn, shades into indifference to conventional human moral norms. Some Eloi pursue relatively harmless but shocking practices such as eating real animal meat or vatgrown human flesh, or engaging in virtual sadomasochistic orgies that cause no real injuries – basically, hobbies that they have to keep private. Others commit outright crimes for political or religious reasons or simply because they enjoy them (see the discussion of twisted Eloi in *Transhuman Space: Transhuman Mysteries*). These may be conservative in spirit rather than radical; most Eloi are older and not entirely at ease in the world of 2100.

## A FOOT IN THE DOOR

Eloi are a community – or a loose-knit assemblage of smaller communities. Following rules from *Social Engineering*, gaining acceptance in such a community can be treated as a reaction roll using the table of Gaining Admission Results (*Social Engineering*, p. 75). An Influence roll against Diplomacy or Savoir-Faire (High Society) can substitute. However, it's tricky to figure out who the right person is! To do this, make a Per-based roll vs. Current Affairs (People) or vs. Sociology or Sociometry (see *Social Engineering*), after eight hours of observation. Alternatively, a Contact or other information source who knows the social scene may be able to help you out.

For gaining initial acceptance, several modifiers apply.

*Bribery*: Use the scale of bribes for a Contact, based on the nominal “pay scale” for Status 4: \$600,000 for a month’s income.

*Fashion Sense (Digital)*: Most Eloi communities interact digitally as much as face to face. This variant on Fashion Sense gives you +1 to gain entrée, or gives the same bonus to someone else whose avatar you design.

*Referral*: Having some form of credentials to present gives +2 to gain entrée. *Examples*: A letter of introduction from someone who knows the community; being able to name a Patron who’s respected there; a Claim to Hospitality.

*Status*: -2 for each level of Status below 4; +2 for each level of Status above 4.

At this point, the new Eloi has just gotten a foot in the door. Actually getting along in Eloi company takes a new set of skill rolls. Typically, these are a variation on “working the crowd” (see *Social Engineering*). The skill normally used is Savoir-Faire (High Society), in an Influence roll against the average Will for the crowd. Winning this roll is good for +1 to general reaction modifiers from individual members of the group at later encounters; losing it inflicts -2.

Even if the Influence roll is unsuccessful, however, any success on Savoir-Faire results in learning names and faces (or digital avatars). Almost anyone venturing into Eloi society will have a digital assistant that can make a permanent record of such meetings. Critical success leads to a meeting with someone notable; critical failure indicates a serious social error (treat this as a penalty of 1d × 10 reputation points).

Fitting into an Eloi community can be helped by cultivating a persona (as discussed in *Social Engineering*). This is basically a form of Acting, but it’s much easier than pretending to be an entirely different person; it’s basically presenting an idealized version of oneself. The required roll is Acting+5, Savoir-Faire (High Society)+3, or IQ. Advice from an AI with the skill of Savoir-Faire (Servant) can help: +1 to effective skill for an LAI, or +2 for an SAI. Fashion Sense also gives +1 by helping with choosing a persona; Honest Face gives +1 by making the persona seem sincere. Winning a Quick Contest vs. the highest IQ of the Eloi community gives +1 to reaction or Influence rolls; losing gives -1. In some Eloi communities, everyone has a cultivated persona and wears it almost all the time.

Gaining lasting acceptance is a long-term project! This is normally treated as a Regular Contest (not a Quick Contest!) of an Influence skill, usually Savoir-Faire (High Society), against the average Will of the community. One attempt may be made

per month. This can be helped by cultivating a persona, which also, in this case, requires one roll per month.

If the skill roll succeeds and the Will roll fails, treat the result as a Very Good reaction, granting full acceptance as “one of us.” If both succeed, or both fail, treat the result as a Neutral reaction. If the skill roll fails and the Will roll succeeds, treat it as a Bad reaction; further Influence rolls are made at -5 to skill. (This penalty is not cumulative!)

Another option is to treat the pursuit of acceptance as a series of reaction rolls, usually at monthly intervals. In addition to the normal reaction roll modifiers, the following apply.

+1 for any level of Diplomacy skill, or +2 for skill 20+.

+1 if you have identified a receptive person to befriend (make a Per-based roll against a suitable skill, such as Connoisseur or Savoir-Faire (High Society)); +3 on a critical success.

+2 if one or more short-term encounters have gone well.

-2 for “rushing it” (expressing an interest less than a month after the first introduction or a previous turndown).

From -4 to +4 based on Reputation in the social circle.

On a Very Good or Excellent reaction, acceptance is gained; record the reaction roll as the loyalty score. On a Good, Neutral, or Poor reaction, the attempt fails, but without prejudice. On a Bad, Very Bad, or Disastrous reaction, -5 to later offers and to other interactions.

Any of these modifiers except that for Diplomacy skill also apply if an Influence skill is used.

After gaining acceptance, a new Eloi can pursue higher social standing, or use his new community as a base for other projects. Notably, in most Fifth Wave and some Fourth Wave countries, it’s increasingly taken for granted that politics is a pursuit for Eloi, who have the free time and the wide-ranging social contacts needed. The United States has a distinctive variant on this pattern: the conservative, Preservationist, and often older Democrats are Eloi-dominated, but an increasing number of Republicans are young professionals combining their regular careers with second careers in government.

Eloi Status can pay off in several ways.

- A high-Status person can approach others as if they were members of a Contact Group (pp. B44-45). This isn’t limited to getting information from them; it can provide entrée to a new social circle, favorable treatment at a public event, or even having a minor illegality overlooked. The GM should determine the effective skill level of each one-time “Contact” and consult the chart below.

<i>Effective Skill</i>	<i>Status</i>
12	1-2
15	3-4
18	5-6
21	7-8

If the effective skill of the temporary “Contact” corresponds to the range for the asker’s Status, treat him as Usually Reliable. For each step by which his effective skill exceeds this, drop his reliability one step, to Somewhat Reliable, then Unreliable, and finally to completely unapproachable.

*Example*: A typical (Status 4) Eloi would find a political campaign staff member (Politics-15) Usually Reliable, a candidate or campaign manager (Politics-18) Somewhat Reliable, and a national-level candidate or party leader (Politics-21) Unreliable.

- The highest-Status candidate for elected office gains a bonus to Politics equal to the difference between his Status and that of the next highest candidate.

- An Eloi who speaks for a political campaign or a cause provides a bonus to the campaign manager's Propaganda skill equal to half the difference between his Status and the target audience's average Status, rounded down. This is risky; a critical failure on the Propaganda roll discredits the spokesman, giving him a negative Reputation equal in size to the bonus he provided!

- Eloi can more easily keep in touch with fashions and cultural trends, if they wish to. Take half the Eloi's Status (rounded down) as a bonus to Current Affairs (High Culture, People, or Travel) or to any Connoisseur skill.

## VIRTUAL REALMS AND ELECTRONIC MEDIA

A large part of Eloi social interaction takes place in virtual spaces. This modifies the usual rules for social interaction.

Virtual spaces are normally three-dimensional and high-definition in both sight and sound, and allow two-way interaction. With these advantages, they grant full effects from social traits such as Appearance, Charisma, and Voice, for those who use their own images and voices. All social skills can be relied on in virtual spaces.

It's possible to edit a person's appearance and voice for the better (or worse!). This calls for a roll against Electronics Operation (Media) – or two rolls to affect both. If the same operator makes both rolls, they are at -2 because of divided attention. A successful roll gives +2 (or -2); a failed roll has no effect; a critical failure creates an obvious distortion. A trained observer can spot such manipulation with a Per-based roll vs. Electronics Operation (Media); treat this as a Quick Contest.

Nonrealistic avatars don't grant Appearance bonuses; anyone can buy an incredibly beautiful avatar (for enough money) or create one (with enough skill in Artist (Virtual Reality)). Fashion Sense (Digital) can create an unusually stylish avatar, worth +1 in online social interaction. A nonrealistic avatar can convey Charisma if its animated motions are based on motion-capture technology, translated into animation in real time.

Eloi social interaction also makes use of *augmented reality* – the projection of virtual images or data into physical space. Fixing one's eyes on a person brings up digital tags with useful information, from public data, purchased private databases, or handshaking between wearables or implants. Such information almost always includes scores in reputation networks. Detailed text dossiers are possible, but they're not the top layer; most augmented reality programs project graphic displays like those used to keep track of a character's condition in a virtual game. People who routinely read other people's text dossiers during realtime interaction have an Odious Personal Habit typically worth -1.

Handshaking allows a person to compose his own set of digital tags. Crafting a good set that will encourage the desired reactions calls for Propaganda skill. Success gives +1 to reaction rolls – but not to Influence rolls.

A related option is "voice under," or sending private messages electronically while carrying on a spoken conversation. Both participants in a two-way conversation roll against Private Messaging (p. 33) to hide their involvement. They must both win a Quick Contest against an observer's Body Language

at +1, Observation, or Per at -1; the observer is at -1 per yard of distance, and may also have penalties for poor lighting.

Eloi always have virtual interfaces operated by sophisticated LAIs or even SAIs. Such an AI can use its own skill at Electronics Operation (Media) to enhance its principal's virtual persona. But it can also offer other services. It can provide Observation or other skills such as Body Language to size up a social situation, though if it uses its principal's own eyes and ears it does so at -2 to skill, because it can't control where he looks or what he listens to in real time. It can offer hints as to suitable contact using Savoir-Faire (High Society), or look up people in internal databases (or online ones, if it has connectivity), using Research or a suitable knowledge skill such as Current Affairs. Any of these skills can be complementary to the principal's own social skills, giving +1 on a success, +2 on a critical success, -1 on a failure, or -2 on a critical failure.

However, though Eloi accept the necessity of digital assistance to maintain a social network on a modern scale, it's considered gauche to call other people's attention to it! An Eloi consulting a digital assistant in real time needs to conceal it with Acting or Savoir-Faire (High Society). Being too obvious is worth -1 point in the local reputation network.

## STORYLINES AND CHALLENGES

It's possible to focus a campaign purely on the Eloi community and people's relationships within it – to make it a near-future soap opera. In this type of campaign, Eloi and would-be Eloi will strive for acceptance, love, influence, and power. This can be a desperate struggle, where people constantly monitor their scores in reputation networks, and watch emerging trends, hoping to get ahead of the fashion and fearing to fall behind it. Many of these tests and rewards are artificial, but the real payoff is acceptance by other people.

Such struggles can lead to other sorts of drama. An Eloi community is a natural setting for a cozy mystery – a murder investigation set in a closed community of the socially privileged, where there are only a few (unlikely) suspects, the investigators may be talented amateurs, and the focus of the drama may be on puzzling out how the murder was committed, or who is lying about it. See *Transhuman Mysteries* for more ideas.

Other legal issues can also arise: lawsuits over property, inheritances, or slander or libel, giving rise to courtroom dramas. An entire campaign could focus on a future law firm serving the wealthy and fashionable. The technology of the future provides any number of new legal issues, from whether a digital mind is really the ghost of someone wealthy, to whether an attack on someone's reputation was an illegal memetic campaign.

It's also possible to turn Eloi outward, physically or socially, on ventures to other planets or to other cultures. Being wealthy enough not to need to worry about money is a good place to start an adventure from! And not all Eloi communities are turned inward toward their own arcane social contests. Some take a lively interest in the world around them; bringing back records of a daring venture can make Eloi adventurers the most desirable of guests. And gaining recognition from Eloi generally, or from groups of other respected explorers or philanthropists in particular, can be a suitable reward for such ventures, and a motive to undertake them.

## Character Traits for Eloi

An Eloi-focused campaign can allow these new variants of existing traits and new techniques.

### *Fashion Sense*

see p. B21

Choosing a digital avatar is as much a form of self-expression as choosing clothes. A new variant of this advantage is thus available.

*Fashion Sense (Digital)*: In defining an online avatar for yourself, you have a sure sense for what's distinctive, ahead of the trend, and just cool. Any avatar you build, assemble, or select by shopping around gives +1 to reaction rolls in online social interaction. You can give *someone else* the same advantage if you can work on his avatar. However, staying ahead of the curve takes constant tweaking; you have to make time to rebuild each avatar for each set of social encounters. *5 points*.

### *Code of Honor*

see p. B127

A new version of Code of Honor exists in *Transhuman Space*.

*Code of Honor (Eloi)*: You may work, and even get paid, but you may not work purely for monetary reasons; you must work for something you believe in. Never treat people differently because of their race, religion, sex, or species. Cultivate knowledge of other cultures; accept unfamiliar customs without criticism or shock. Treat your personal staff fairly and generously. Guard your

score on your reputation network, and avoid doing anything that could endanger it. *-5 points*.

### *New Technique: Private Messaging*

Hard

*Default: Computer Operation.*

Anyone with a virtual interface implant is constantly monitoring the virtual as well as the physical environment. This makes possible private virtual conversation in parallel with physical conversation. A wearable virtual interface can be used for the same purpose, but at -3 to skill.

Private messaging can be practiced as a Hard technique with no upper limit. It's possible to base it on IQ-4 (the default for Computer Operation); children often learn such tricks before they study Computer Operation formally.

### *New Technique: Synching*

Hard

*Default: Electronics Operation (Media)-2*

*Prerequisite: Electronics Operation (Media); cannot exceed Electronics Operation (Media).*

A person's appearance or voice can be enhanced (or distorted) on electronic channels, but adjusting both simultaneously requires two rolls, each at a penalty of -2, because of divided attention. With practice, an operator can learn to share time more effectively, and reduce or eliminate the penalty. Both sight and sound benefit from this technique; two rolls are still required, but each is at less or no penalty.

A campaign might not send just one Eloi off on a great adventure, but an entire party. The "grand tour" of Europe used to be considered the crucial final stage in an upper-class English education. An Eloi group might undertake a grand tour of the outer solar system, perhaps lasting years – after all, most Eloi assume they have a very long lifespan ahead of them. More preservationist-minded Eloi might stay on Earth, visiting historic places, protected ecosystems, or physically challenging environments such as caves or the ocean depths.

A different variant on this theme would be a campaign set almost entirely in virtual reality or "cyberspace." Classically, this is the focus of cyberpunk as a genre, with heroes coming back from cyberspace to a poor, crowded, and corrupt urban setting. But *Transhuman Space* could approach it from the other side, with economically secure heroes going online to find excitement or solve some mystery.

Another option is a *social* outward turn. Eloi who support a cause – whether a widely known ideology such as pansapien-tism or preservationism, or a more unusual concern – can offer themselves as spokesmen for that cause. Some Eloi may go beyond this, agreeing to have cameras follow them around, or even uploading their own sensory experiences as they work for a better future.

Players looking for a challenge might undertake the role, not of true Eloi, but of cunning criminals preying on Eloi through ingenious scenarios. Many of the classic capers don't work in *Transhuman Space* – it's hard to steal when works of art and similar physical assets have been scanned microscopically, and when unsleeping house AIs watch over them – but new kinds of tricks have become possible. For example, an Eloi celebrity might be the subject of an effort to capture his appearance and personality as a digital shadow, or as a model for bioroid designers.

Finally, an Eloi campaign could be a comedy rather than a drama. Typically, it's a comedy of manners, where social mis-steps and personal eccentricities abound, though a romantic comedy would be another option.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

William H. Stoddard is a professional copy editor, specializing in scientific and scholarly books. His previous work for Steve Jackson Games includes *Transhuman Space: Transhuman Mysteries*, *GURPS Social Engineering*, and the latest editions of *GURPS Supers* and *GURPS Low-Tech*. He lives in San Diego with his cohabitant Carol, two cats, two computers, and far too many books!

# RANDOM THOUGHT TABLE

## THE FUTURE IS WHAT YOU MAKE IT

BY STEVEN MARSH, *PYRAMID* EDITOR

Predicting the future is hard. In any game set in the near-now, alternate near-now, or even distant-future, there's going to be predictions that don't pan out. These can be explicit as part of the background ("the ice age will destroy the world!") or implicit as part of the design process ("these far-flung space-ships have up to *five megabytes* of memory!"). *Transhuman Space* is sufficiently distanced from the current age that it doesn't need to worry too much about such affairs; the world fluctuates enough that certain elements that made sense in 2002 but don't seem applicable now might become reasonable in the future. (It's fascinating how Japan has periodically fluctuated between enemy and ally in the past 100 years or so.) Still, for those who are running games set in the not-too-distant future, there are some tacks that you can take to bring the settings up to code.

### WATCH YOUR TONE!

When the future-world that you want to use doesn't mesh our current view of technology, the key is to ensure that the *tone* remains the same, and retroactively adjust or hand-wave continuity so it makes sense. For example, a cyberpunk setting based on a view of "the future" that was conceived in the 1980s might envision everyone accessing a series of BBS-type groups using public (or semipublic) ATM-style devices. (Those newfangled ATMs were huge in the '80s . . .) But the ascendancy of the Internet in our real world gave rise to a new view of how connectivity of the future might look, with everyone at home experiencing the Net on giant computer screens. Then – a few years later – the rise of tablets and smartphones provided yet another view of the future, with all of us accessing a world of information while we're on the go.

Getting back to our faux future conceived at a time when dial-up modems seemed all the rage: The tone of such a setting might be striving for dystopian corporate control over everything. Whether everyone is accessing BBS-type groups at outdoor ATMs or Facebook-like websites in the comfort of their

own home, corporate goons out to get the heroes can just as easily track a Wi-Fi signal to an omnipresent coffee-shop chain as they can locate a specific street-corner public-access terminal. In both cases, the GM forces the tone to remain the same, regardless of the underlying difference in technology.

Similarly, if your world was designed on the assumption that (say) a strong euro usurps the dominance of the American dollar, and – in our world – the euro is eventually dissolved because of the inability of European Union member nations to deal with their debt issues, then perhaps the franc, pound, or deutschmark assumes the role of most desired currency in the world. With a little hand-waving, the players are likely to accept such a swap even during an active campaign: Who cares what currency their suitcase was full of when they went on the Vanderblak mission? The point is, that suitcase blew up, and Vanderblak agents are still after them!

### *What's Next?*

Even now, trying to figure out what the future is doing just a few years out is challenging: Will "augmented reality" take the world by storm? Will *anyone* ever use QR codes?

### IT IS WHAT IT IS . . .

From a player's point of view, perhaps the easiest thing to do is to assume that – for whatever reason – the technology or world situation described has come to pass (or revert) exactly as it is. In this case, the challenge is for the GM to come up with the justification for why that has happened, or why the world has regressed.

For example, let's envision our hypothetical classic science-fiction RPG that does something silly like assume that the largest available storage device is five megabytes.

It'd be straightforward to assume it's laughably wrong and think of new values, but that might break some underlying math or assumptions of the setting. So what if, instead, you realize that 99% of what computers are going to be used for in the setting is aboard ships going faster than light. Bingo: You've got the justification you need to remain true to the original setting. Just say that – as a side effect of the FTL process – it proves disastrously destructive to typical storage methods. However, devices can be hardened with (say) unobtainium. Such computers will survive FTL intact . . . but memory is necessarily limited, owing to the made-up properties of unobtainium. Sure, you *could* have a multi-petabyte system, if you don't mind losing all the data the first time you leave the solar system. This way, you can accept the five-megabyte limit and keep the setting intact.

As another example, a plot element of *Star Wars: A New Hope* hinges on Princess Leia getting plans for the Death Star from Point A to Point B. This made sense for 1977 – in an era where carrying top-secret plans from Point A to Point B seemed like the best plan – but nowadays it feels odd. Why couldn't she just upload the plans to whatever widely accessible database systems existed, or beamed using FTL communications? Why didn't she make as many copies as she could and spew them throughout the galaxy? (There wasn't any danger of the plans falling into the wrong hands; she *was* the wrong hands!) But the tone of the Star Wars universe hinges on a “do things in person” methodology, so it's best to come up with a plan that sidesteps these issues. Maybe the plans were big enough that any subspace communications would be impractical. Maybe the Empire was already flooding the airwaves with fake versions of its plans, and only something delivered in “person” could be vouched for.

As a final example, the *Car Wars* universe (developed in the early 1980s) has gas-engine rules that make extensive use of carburetors. In the real world, fuel injectors replaced carburetors by the 1990s. Rather than try to figure out competing rules for injectors, it's probably easiest to come up with a reason why carburetors remained in use. Maybe the fuel refinement system of the post-apocalyptic world is cruddy enough that injectors get damaged too easily, while carburetors remain sturdy enough. Maybe there's enough background radiation that cars' computers are unreliable at controlling injectors, making the more mechanical carburetors more attractive. Regardless, by coming up with a justification for the original rules to remain in use, none of that game's underlying math is affected.

In all these examples, whatever the justification used, the facts of the real world have been altered just enough to match the original design. In all cases, the themes remain identical.

## ... UNLESS IT'S SOMETHING DIFFERENT

Perhaps the most interesting thing to do is to think of how a setting's themes or flavor might be affected by having different assumptions. For example, a setting that retains the Star Wars universe core while adapting different technological assumptions of ubiquitous networking would probably resemble something like *The Matrix*. (It also seems likely that

“the history of the Star Wars universe with the assumptions and thematic style of *The Matrix*” would do pretty well at finding players . . .)

Or say that the SF universe with the previously pitiful computer storage and memory is upgraded to modern standards. How does the math on the rest of the system hold up to assuming (more or less) unlimited storage? If the increased computational abilities suddenly make all spaceships incredibly powerful in combat – without a comparable increase in defensive ability – then the flavor of the universe changes considerably. Maybe the galaxy becomes more isolationist, since getting caught out in the wilds of space is the equivalent of wandering amid bandit-infested forests without armor. Or maybe ships are rejiggered so that speed is king, enabling vessels to do their best to avoid damage. Stepping back, maybe (near-) unlimited storage allows for untold bonuses in skill rolls, or countless bonuses to trading profits. Any of these options would make the universe very different – which might be useful in coming up with a setting that's simultaneously familiar yet wildly different.

The *Transhuman Space* setting makes a number of underlying assumptions about how the world will appear in 70-some-odd years. Some of those assumptions might look long in the tooth, now or in the future. By examining those assumptions, you can determine if you'll remain true to the core themes, the underlying world constructed, or the “real world”; any of these possibilities can result in a better tomorrow of great gaming.

For further inspiration on post-modern settings, see *Looking to the Future* on p. 36.

*Yearly reminder: unless  
you're over 60, you weren't  
promised flying cars.  
You were promised an  
oppressive cyberpunk  
dystopia. Here you go.*

*– Kyle Marquis*

## ABOUT THE EDITOR

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

# ODDS AND ENDS

## BARGAIN BASEMENT BIOROIDS

by Jason "PK" Levine

Third-Wave transitional areas (like those featured in *We Are the 9.9%*, pp. 12-17) give the GM a chance to selectively showcase a few higher-Wave setting issues, such as bioroid rights. As Fourth-Wave technology, cutting-edge bioroids are uncommon in L.A. outside of the arcologies. However, several criminal organizations have contacts in the bioroid trafficking industry (*Transhuman Space*, p. 106), from whom they acquire unlicensed copies of discontinued designs. These copies tend to be inferior versions, such as pleasure models who are merely resistant to disease instead of immune (putting overconfident customers at risk); see the Berahi (below) for one example.

At first glance, it may seem odd for such organizations to even bother with bioroids, given a seemingly never-ending supply of runaways, migrants, brainbug junkies, etc. But true black-market bioroids offer a significant benefit: They don't officially exist. Using unregistered bioroids means no family members trying to free them, no "missing persons" reports to

deal with, and considerable difficulty to any investigation if one ends up dead. On top of that, enslaved bioroids are most commonly found in prostitution, where their masters can justify *much* higher prices, due to the cachet afforded to pleasure models ("A person can service you, but a bioroid was built from the ground up to rock your world!") and the illicit thrill most customers have at interacting with a "preban" design.

If bioroid issues are given some time in the spotlight, it makes sense to feature the GRA as well. They have a small, understaffed, local office in Los Angeles, where they focus heavily on putting a stop to bioroid trafficking. Agents of the GRA can make excellent PCs; build them as gunjin (p. 14) or skiptracer (pp. 14-15) investigators. Alternatively, play up the "fanatical genecop" stereotype and use the GRA to add another shade of gray to the setting – they're here to do their job, no matter who gets hurt. If running *Guerreiros in the Mist* (pp. 15-16), Burke might even work for the GRA instead of the CBI.

Or for a more personal approach, allow select bioroid templates (such as the Berahi) as PCs. A former prostitute who escaped slavery might now be a fierce bioroids rights activist (pp. 12-13), a skiptracer "recovery specialist," a gunjin expert on the subject, etc.

## Looking to the Future

The notion of trying to make sense of the future is not a new topic for Random Thought Table. After you finish *The Future Is What You Make It* (pp. 34-35), continue your examination of times yet to come with these readings from the archives.

- *A Spoonful of Cyber Helps the Megacorp Go Down* (in *Pyramid* #3/21: *Cyberpunk*): How to add the cyberpunk lens to other genres. While not directly related, these ideas can provide inspiration for ways the different aspects of the *Transhuman Space* universe can meld together.
- *Echoes and Repercussions* (in *Pyramid* #3/37: *Tech and Toys II*): A look at how the future can contain vestigial remnants of the past.
- *The Right Tech from Finish to Start* (in *Pyramid* #3/39: *Steampunk*): Includes an example of how to tweak a setting's tech to match genre expectations.

## Berahi

0 points

**Attribute Modifiers:** HT+2 [20].

**Secondary Characteristic Modifiers:** Will-1 [-5]; Basic Speed-0.50 [-10].

**Advantages:** Very Handsome/Beautiful (Off-the-Shelf Looks, -50%) [8]; Less Sleep 2 [4]; Resistant to Disease (+8) [5]; Voice [10].

**Perks:** Deep Sleeper; Sanitized Metabolism. [2]

**Disadvantages:** Bioroid Body [-4]; Chummy [-5]; Lecherousness (12) [-15]; Social Stigma (Minority Group)\* [-10].

**Quirks:** Attentive; Broad-Minded. [-2]

**Racial Skill Modifiers:** +1 to Erotic Art [2].

**Date:** 2095. **Cost:** \$60,000†.

\* In L.A., at least. This is not a fixed part of the racial template; adjust it as appropriate in other areas.

† Nominally. In practice, criminal organizations can often get bulk orders at a *steep* discount.

*Perhaps the greatest impulse to trying to foresee and plan the future comes from the combination of having new tools with which to do it and the growing realization that every technological and social innovation has repercussions which spread like a wave through the complex interlocked sections of society.*

– Ward Madden

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