

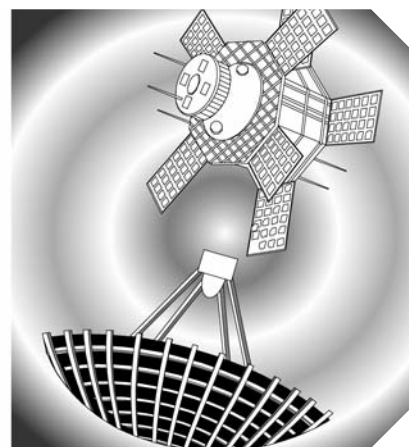
GURPS®

Fourth Edition



*TERALOGOS NEWS*TM

2101, FIRST QUARTERTM



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Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the **GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition**. Page references that begin with B refer to that book, not this one.

INTRODUCTION

Back in 2002-2003, the background for Steve Jackson Games' *Transhuman Space* hard SF setting was expanded by a series of reports from that solar system's leading news source, Teralogos News (*Fifth Wave*, p. 64), distributed through an e-mail mailing list. Since then, this rich collection of setting details, local color, and potential scenario seeds has only been available in the form of a little-known raw text file.

So we've decided to do something about that. This is one of four free PDF files that collect those reports.

The dates on each report are a bit of stylistic detail, related to the real-world dates on which the posts were originally distributed. Don't take them too seriously as setting canon; after all, *Transhuman Space* doesn't have a fixed future or "metaplot."

The incidents described in these reports can occur whenever suits your own campaign.

– Phil Masters

ABOUT THE EDITOR

Phil Masters is the author of *Transhuman Space: Changing Times*, *Transhuman Space: Shell-Tech*, *Transhuman Space: Personnel Files 1-5*, and a chapter in *Transhuman Space: High Frontier*. He has also worked on countless other **GURPS** products, including **GURPS Castle Falkenstein**, *The Discworld Roleplaying Game*, and **GURPS Y2K**, and on products for other companies.

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2101, FIRST QUARTER

SEARCH FOR THE OLDEST LIVING HUMAN

MUMBAI, India/Teralogos: January 8, 2101

Producers of the popular CenturyQuest! interactive video show have announced a search for the oldest living human being. When located, this individual will be offered a multi-million-euro contract for exclusive interviews and the publication of a biography. CenturyQuest! producers invite men or women who can prove that they were born before January 1, 1960 and have never undergone cryonic suspension or nanostasis to contact them at oldest_human@centuryquest.marwari.co.in.

CenturyQuest! has been published on a weekly basis since March 16, 2096 by Marwari Digital. It combines reporting on genetic upgrades and geriatric medicine with human-interest stories on the super-elderly. Current ratings indicate that it reaches approximately 50.6 million viewers per week.

– filed by Jon F. Zeigler

A MONSTROUS EGO?

TOKYO, Japan/Teralogos: January 21, 2101

Reclusive director Kansuke O is said to be considering having a semi-sapient bioroid “monster” created to star in his next slinky. Yokose Studios recently signed O to direct the next release in its popular *Kyoryura* series of giant monster productions. Previous installments in the series have been InVids that relied on digital effects or cybershells to create the monstrous star, but O now reportedly favors a fully live-action slinky production starring a living Kyoryura.

“If Kyoryura lives, slinky technology will enable fans to actually experience the action as if they were the monster,” said Yokose spokesperson Akiko Tomizawa. “Kyoryura X is the true, ultimate, realization of Kansuke O’s vision.”

Plans for a slinky version of Kyoryura have been in the offing for some time. According to Yokose insiders, O only reluctantly gave up his initial plans for a full-sized version of the 100-meter-tall Kyoryura due to liability and practical concerns, agreeing to an elephant-sized monster instead.

“Biotech Euphrates is the most likely contractor,” said Tomizawa. “Although we’re also talking with Avatar. It depends on where we end up shooting, since ideally we’ll want to grow it locally. We intend to record the monster’s scenes in an indoor set in either one of the Huygens City domes on Titan or a lava tube complex on Luna: Kyoryura is bipedal, and in 1/7 Earth gravity he’ll be able to walk upright or jump without worrying about the pesky square-cube law.”

– filed by Patrick Sweeney

TOO MUCH TO SWALLOW?

THE COMBS, Mare Frigoris Industrial Zone,
Luna/Teralogos: January 27, 2101

“When I realized what had happened, I was giddy at first – then I got mad!”

When lunar geology graduate student Beth Shang stumbled across what appeared to be alien artifacts in a previously unexplored lava tube in Mare Frigoris, she was stunned. So were her classmates from the University of Melbourne, on Luna for a field research trip. Excited (and skeptical) messages were flying across the web even as the artifacts – a series of black, diamond-fiber pillars – were discovered. Equipment and personnel were rushed to the site from Luna City and even Earth. Unconfirmed reports had the Prime Minister of Australia being awakened to be told the news, and the JSDF/ADF Lunar Composite Force at Tranquility preparing to secure the site for the PRA.

“I was there when Dr. Howard removed the last pillar, and we found the *Don’t Eat That!* sign under it,” continued Beth. “My first reaction was to laugh, and look for the cameras. Like pretty much everybody, I enjoy *Don’t Eat That!* on InVid whenever I can catch it. I just never expected to be the butt of one of their pranks.”

Don’t Eat That! is the enormously popular InVid hidden-camera prank and game show hosted by former KT Event lead singer Min Volume. In a typical episode, hidden InVid cameras record a series of increasingly outlandish pranks played on an unsuspecting victim. When the victim realizes what’s going on, he or she can play games – typically involving messy substances – for cash prizes.

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The *Don't Eat That!* episode for January 26 was different, however, in that the producers spent upwards of \$8 million to artfully conceal plausibly alien items in a fairly inaccessible part of Luna. One of the producers has a relative in the U. Melbourne graduate program, and learned of the upcoming expedition. Inspiration struck, and the *Don't Eat That!* team scrambled to set up the prank in time.

"We honestly never realized it would go that far," claimed *Don't Eat That!* producer Saito Aki. "We'd never done something on that scale, we didn't know it would spiral out of control like that."

Don't Eat That! has been hit with a \$50 million bill from the University of Melbourne, which is trying to cover the costs of their rapid deployment to the site. The producers are still in discussions with their lawyers as to whether to comply with this demand. Other damages, however, will be harder to repair.

"For a brief moment, I thought the universe was suddenly much more exciting than we had believed, and that we'd finally discover some sign of alien life in the cosmos," said Beth Shang. "Now, I'm just kind of sad that the height of human civilization is a stupid game show."

– filed by Jamais Cascio

*For a brief moment,
I thought the universe was
suddenly much more exciting
than we had believed . . .*

ESPERANTE EXECUTIVE ASSASSINATED

LAGOS, Nigeria/Teralogos: February 3, 2101

Acting on an anonymous tip, police found the body of corporate executive Henrik Muller in a back alley this morning.

Muller was discovered bound with cufftape but otherwise unmarked. The cause of death was determined to be massive nervous damage due to "scrambler" nano. "His cerebral cortex had been reduced to a featureless jelly," said Dr. William Gemade, medical examiner for the Lagos municipal police. "If he had any plans to become a ghost, I'd say they were decisively ruined. The worst part was that he was probably conscious when the process began."

Muller, who was reported missing on December 26, was a senior executive with Esperante Enterprises, a Lagos-based corporation specializing in development projects in poor Third Wave nations. Esperante Enterprises has long come under harsh criticism from human rights advocates for its alleged cooperation with corrupt local regimes and exploitation of local workers. While Esperante is a major employer in many developing nations, it mainly employs unskilled VT workers, who follow rote instruction from their virtual interfaces, which are not owned by the workers but rented to them.

Lagos police reported that they had received an anonymous email, routed through Free Net, from an individual claiming to be Muller's killer. The email denounced Esperante Enterprises, and promised further direct action "on behalf of the victims of global capitalism." At present, authorities are treating the death as a politically-motivated murder.

– filed by Jon F. Zeigler

GAZA DESALINATION PLANT GOES ONLINE

GAZA, Palestine/Teralogos: February 10, 2101

Palestinian President Muhammad Al-Hamedy was present for the dedication of the Gaza Desalination Station, calling it "a major step toward the true independence of the Palestinian people."

Built largely with funds from the Islamic Caliphate and Israel, the fusion-powered plant has been plagued by accidents and delays. All of that was forgotten during today's celebrations, as the plant operated smoothly on its first day online. By the end of the day, engineers reported that 52 million liters of Mediterranean seawater had been purified and pumped into the Gaza distribution system.

The new plant is expected to end freshwater shortages in the Palestinian Enclaves, especially once a trans-Israel freshwater pipeline is completed later this year. Israeli officials expressed cautious optimism that the new pipeline would reduce cross-border tensions. "Water rights have always been a point of contention between Israel and its Palestinian neighbors," said Israeli Prime Minister David Gould, a guest at today's ceremony. "The progress of civilization is about ending such conflicts by replacing scarcity with plenty."

– filed by Jon F. Zeigler

TRIPLANETARY LINES OFFERS DISCOUNT MARS RATES

ISLANDIA, L4/Teralogos: February 18, 2101

In an expansion of their successful TransMars program, Triplanetary Lines is reassigning two of their newest Meizic-class passenger space vessels – *Zubatka* and *Golden Swan* – to the Earth-Mars passenger route. The two vessels have been recently refitted with additional passenger accommodations and are expected to reenter service on March 10, 2101. The additions to the Earth-Mars route underlines a new strategy for the company, which had previously concentrated on high-margin cargo transports.

"Since the Mars space elevator became operational, Triplanetary Lines has seen steady growth in the Earth-Mars passenger business. This has far outstripped our expectations, and we are working to give it more attention," said Juan Cabrillo, Triplanetary Lines President and CEO. "The move of these two vessels to the TransMars route will further reduce our already-low prices and further cement our growing lead in this important market. We expect the current one-way economy ticket price from Earth HEO to Mars LEO to drop 7-10% by the end of this year."

Triplanetary has been aggressive in breaking the near-monopoly enjoyed by rival Mars Interplanetary, establishing generous long-term shipping contract with brokers and expanding their network of freehauler affiliates for charter transport to the Main Belt and the rest of the Deep Beyond. Their liberal management policies regarding bioroid and AI rights have landed them several high-profile government contracts with the EU and they enjoy considerable clout with the independent Farhauler's Guild – although at the expense of profits compared to the more aggressive cost-cutting actions of Mars Interplanetary.

“Our expansion of Earth-Mars passenger service is an exciting opportunity for those planning to make an interplanetary trip,” Cabrillo stated. “Triplanetary Lines’ commitment to value and integrity has never diminished and our customers and partners can continue to rely on us as we move into the 22nd century. As new vessels are added to our growing fleet we will further diversify our offerings and increase our presence both on Mars and the outer solar system.”

– filed by Kenneth Peters

TRAVELER'S TALE

COLUMBIA STATION,
Earth Orbit/Teralogos: February 25, 2101

They gave Sven Egilsson the Fergus Memorial Award for travel writing last week. Normally, the ceremony is held in November, but they had to wait this time; Egilsson insisted on collecting it in person, and that meant that he had to come half-way across the system to Columbia Station. It may seem good of them to delay things just for him, but given what he won it for, it was fitting. And when I asked to interview him, he insisted on meeting me in person, too, and I couldn't argue.

That is why I'm sitting in a Columbia Station bar, drinking locally brewed beer, when everyone starts staring at the doorway. After all, you don't see many non-humanoid cybershells in bars, and Egilsson's custom 'shell is an arachnophobe's nightmare, with limbs which switch between use as legs, arms, or sensor masts seemingly at random, and a heavy casing that looks like it's been sandblasted and then tinted with unearthly acids. Which, in fact, it has – on Mars and Venus, among other places.

He scuttles across the room to me, asks what I'm drinking, then pauses before announcing that he's downloaded the flavor model from the Web, and yes, it tastes good to him. For a radical transhumanist personality upload – a ghost – Egilsson seems awfully attached to the experiences of flesh.

Which is somewhat the point here. Egilsson is a traveler who believes in doing things the old-fashioned way. When he wants to visit another planet, he doesn't just have himself beamed there, or even sit in orbit and teleoperate a tourist cybershell; he goes down in person, in the same cybershell every time. (Which is why it has to be a custom model. In fact, it's probably the toughest, most versatile cybershell you'll meet outside the U.S. Army.) And he doesn't power down while he's in transit, either; he travels by fastliner, and mingles with the other passengers all the way.

You may gather that Egilsson is quite rich. Believe me, travel writing doesn't pay well enough to support all that. So I ask him why he bothers, when he could just as easily sit at home on a very secure mainframe with a virtual harem, and download all the slinky records of other places that he might ever want.

At which, a small screen pops out of the cybershell and displays the face that belonged on his old body, which smiles.

“I'm interested in making the most of reality,” he says, “not in escaping from it.”

>>This is a free sample from our popular magazine channels. For the full interview, in InVid or slinky format, please subscribe to **Teralogos-People**.<<

– filed by Phil Masters

RECORD ATTENDANCE AT UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

GENEVA, Switzerland/Teralogos: March 5, 2101

Attendance of member nations at the United Nations General Assembly in Geneva has reached 42% this week, as nations send delegates to attend the ongoing U.N. Conference on International Aid. The last time attendance in the General Assembly rose above 40% of member nations was in 2084, when members of the Transpacific Socialist Alliance called for an emergency session to discuss the Pacific War. Since the UN began publishing attendance statistics in 2063, the average proportion of member states attending General Assembly sessions has been about 32%.

“I'm quite encouraged,” said U.N. Secretary-General Rajiv Pandya in a public statement. “That so many member states have chosen to attend a non-emergency session demonstrates that the United Nations Organization is far from irrelevant in today's world. Humanity needs a place in which to discuss and resolve ongoing problems, and we provide the best forum available.”

Notable delegations attending this week's session include those of the United States (last attending in 2076) and the People's Republic of China (last attending in 2085).

– filed by Jon F. Zeigler

DIVAD BLASTS TO THE FINISH IN MARS-EARTH PLASMA SAIL RACE

ISLANDIA/Teralogos: March 12, 2101

Julia Divad won the 4th Annual Solar Cup on Wednesday, narrowly beating last year's winner, Kei Noguchi, with a record time of three months, five days, and six minutes. Her racer, *Raptor of Dawn*, is the first to have been designed and assembled in the Islandia Lagrange 4 colony.

“I really think I owe the win to my friends and family who kept me motivated over the trip,” said Divad. “I've raced by inhabiting cybershells, but the Solar Cup is significantly harder. They make an effort to keep the pilots as close to a baseline human as possible – three months in a stinky meat shell without any pain overrides makes me appreciate my other bodies a lot more. I'm just glad I lucked out towards the end, it was a tight race all the way back from the Mars gravity slingshot.”

Divad had been in second place until an electrical fire in Noguchi's crew compartment forced him and his racer *Eye of Ra* to drop out. The accident was one of several that have given the Solar Cup a reputation for dangerously lax safety regulations and restrictive race rules that prevent automation of piloting and repairs.

"We're all very disappointed by the accident but we'll be back next year to get the Cup," Team Noguchi chief engineer Byron McMahon told reporters, speaking from the team's base at Bifrost Station, Earth orbit.

In third place was Sun Yue's *Feng Huang*, one of five Mars-built vessels in this year's race.

— filed by Kenneth Peters

NOTED PHILOSOPHER TURNS ISOLATE

LOS ANGELES, *United States/Teralogos*: March 19, 2101

Citing increasing discontent with modern civilization, renowned bioethicist and philosopher Thomas Takahashi announced today that he would be retreating to an Isolate community in Qinghai province, People's Republic of China.

"By embracing biotechnology, human genetic engineering, and cybernetic uploading, we have destroyed our own humanity," said Takahashi. "I find I can no longer tolerate the memetic dissonance that is a constant feature of Fifth Wave existence. It's long past time for me to withdraw and seek to regain contact with my own human nature." Takahashi did not give a date for his move, but claimed that it would be "a matter of days."

Takahashi will be joining the Gyaye Commune, an Isolate community not far from Lake Kokonor in Qinghai province. Gyaye Commune was established in 2093 by European Preservationists, who chose the site due to its extremely remote location. The community was built with the approval of Chinese officials, who welcomed Europeans' investment in the local web infrastructure.

A full professor of bioethics at UCLA, Takahashi has long been a passionate advocate for Preservationist ideas and a critic of modern culture. His first book, *After Man*, was a runaway bestseller in 2083, earning him a global audience. He is a close friend and confidante of U.S. President Roberto Marquez. He will be giving up his current position at UCLA in order to move to Gyaye Commune, although he announced plans to serve as an occasional guest lecturer via telepresence.

— filed by Jon F. Zeigler

INVID REVIEW: THE TEMPEST

Starring Kao Tsu, Jen Shan-Ta, Katrina Brandt, and Kevin Lo; directed by Gupta Patel. Published by Calcutta Interactive.

Over the last few years, Shakespeare's final complete play has suffered the most tragic fate which can overtake a classic text; it has become *relevant*. I swear, if I see one more InVid staging which transmutes Prospero's island into an L-5 station, with Ariel as an infomorph and Caliban as an experimental bioroid, I'll claw out my implant. The one substantial exception, I suppose, was Ivana Gore's treatment; her "Globe Reborn" sequence got around to *The Tempest* a couple of years ago, just before it finished, as Gore obeyed her rule of strict chronology. However, that was a slinky presentation. I'm told by those who've chosen to investigate the medium that it was a technical masterpiece; apparently, you could tell that the

experiencer was a sailor down among the groundlings, freshly returned from months at sea, enjoying everything he'd missed and eyeing up the women between acts. But absolutely nothing will convince me that Gore's quixotic project was anything more than a sterile exercise in "educational" reconstruction. The play deserves better than to be treated as an excuse for gimmickry of any kind.

Given that, you may be surprised to learn that I found Gupta Patel's new production surprisingly effective. It is modern dress, but I'm happy to say that Patel has found a new angle. To begin with, he's located it back on an *island*, apparently somewhere in the Indonesian archipelago, which, thank god, means that the opening storm sequence makes some kind of sense without massive rewriting. (We may even imagine that this modern Prospero has access to weather mod technology, but the idea isn't forced on us.) And when the storm abates, we see the most daring touch, as Prospero struts across his pocket kingdom in the uniform of a TSA military officer.

The idea of the old wizard as a Nanosocialist may not be entirely new, but previously he's been depicted as, at most, a Fifth Wave idealist, and an attractive spokesman. This Prospero, however, looks suspiciously like a Thai war criminal, hiding out from Chinese assassins as much as from the glib, shallow memeticists and politicians who've exiled him and classed him as "presumed dead." Kao Tsu catches the part superbly, with something of that horrible mixture of pride and detachment we saw in the patchy post-Pacific War show trials. It makes the ending of the play, normally so problematic to modern audiences (or at least to transhumanists), as much a confession of guilt as a renunciation of power. And we are pleased by this; we may no longer believe in the dangers of magic, but we believe in "Crimes Against Humanity."

*Am I prepared to
forgive Patel the modern
dress and the "relevance"?*

The problem that this reading of the play does impose is Prospero's minions, who don't seem to be spirits or monsters (or AIs, or bioroids), but all too human lieutenants who must have accompanied Prospero in his flight from defeat in the Pacific War. Ariel, played with fine control by Jen Shan-Ta, is a dapper staff officer-batman, responsible for the old man's computer systems and also for the state of his uniform. (In one ostentatiously restrained sequence, the InVid narrows down to a single wordless three minute sequence where the only available viewpoint is from Ariel's eyes as he polishes Prospero's boots to a mirror sheen, his own face slowly becoming visible in the jet black surface. This Ariel may not literally be the wizard's creation, but he exists to serve, and his identity is just a reflection.) Caliban (Kevin Lo) is a bodyguard and a thug, and probably a torturer, now grown bored with his position in the absence of anyone to hurt. All of which is fine in itself, but makes much of Shakespeare's dialogue about the history of the relationship — preserved intact in this production — weirdly incongruous.

Even as metaphors, calling Ariel and Caliban the former servant and the child of the witch Sycorax just doesn't make sense if they are soldiers from his old unit.

The production in general is naturalistic rather than realistic. There is no way that Katrina Brandt, who gives a neurotic, fastidious performance as Miranda, could be Kao's daughter, whatever her mother's origins and whatever genemods her parents might have chosen. Patel completely eschews manipulating the visual images of his actors, enabling the fine detail of their performances to shine through. The cast's professional backgrounds are diverse, although most of them come from the East Asian theatrical world, but they're all very good (except for Paul Marcos, who sleepwalks through the part of Ferdinand; he seems less transported by love, or concerned with the possibility that his future father-in-law may be inclined to xoxing and nanoplague warfare, than bored to be away from a reliable Web link for 10 minutes). Many of the viewpoints move close in to the cast's faces at key moments, and I found myself locking onto these, enthralled by the understated but emotive performances. The sets and locations are

handsome without distracting from the play, and again are mostly real. Even the background music, compiled by the Artistic SAI "Vivex" from historical sources, displays restraint and fine judgment.

So, am I prepared to forgive Patel the modern dress and the "relevance"? Well, maybe, almost. His heart's in the right place. It's typical that the only synthespians in the cast are the ship's crew, glimpsed briefly at the start and end of the production; the "illusory" actors in the magical masque are all real (although they include several exotic bioroids). This might seem perverse, but I think that it shows that Patel is not obsessed with spurious relevance, but cares about the play's origins, while remembering that it is actually timeless. On the other hand, he seems so concerned with his big idea about Prospero that he forgets about most of the rest of the cast. Antonio and the rest of Prospero's old foes are left as ciphers. Are they, we wonder, Chinese agents, collaborators, nationalist moderates, or what? There is no clear answer. But the fact that the question feels so appropriate is a sign of the production's quality.

— filed by Phil Masters

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