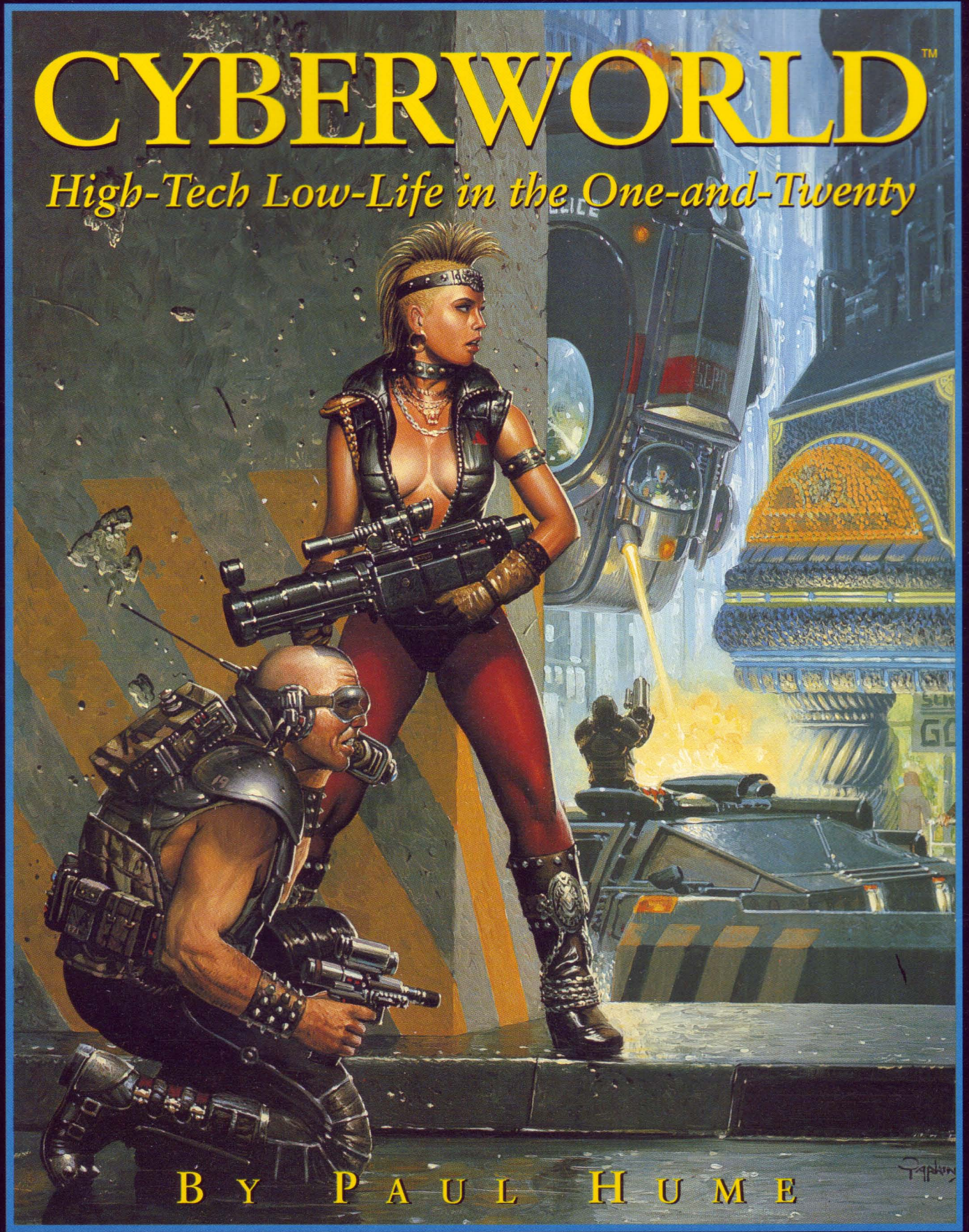
GURPS®

CYBERWORLD™

High-Tech Low-Life in the One-and-Twenty



By Paul Hume

STEVE JACKSON GAMES

LIFE IS CHEAP ON THE EDGE

So, paryeni, you think you got what it takes to live on the Edge. Lots of livewires think so. Most of them wind up rotting in the body banks. We'll see . . . we'll see.

GURPS Cyberworld is your guide to the world of the One-and-Twenty, where the United States is under the totalitarian hold of the Provisional Government, the cities are floundering in their own decay and technology races forward faster and faster.

This book has everthing players and GMs need to explore a dangerous and brutal world. If you're quick enough, you can outwit the black-clad Nerks, get enough cred and connections to fix yourself up with some street cyberwear, and maybe even jack into the global net and poke around for some easy loot. But if the korp console jockeys catch you in their part of the matrix, you'll be dodging zeromen for the rest of your short life.

Inside you'll find:

- *The World.* A 50-year history of the United States and the rest of the world from 1993 to 2043.
- *Culture on the Edge.* Musicians and their cyberaxes . . . and bloodsport gladiators, decked out with lethal body-mods.
- *Crime and Punishment.* Including the vicious Mafia, more powerful than ever, the brutal Chinese Triads, and the 'Traffs, cold-hearted drugrunners from South America.
- *Technology.* Cyberwear, guns, grenades, lasers and gyrocs, plus other equipment. Everything a street-op needs to stay one step ahead of the Nerks.
- *The Net.* From personal computers to supermainframes to the experimental cyberdecks, this chapter has it all. Plus new attack and defense programs for bold netrunners.

This book also includes maps, tables and lots of new adventure ideas for *GURPS Cyberpunk* roleplaying.

So come on, dyadooska, get with it. Don't be the only one in the sprawl who hasn't arrived in the One-and-Twenty.

Written by Paul Hume
Additional material by
Chris W. McCubbin
Edited by Jeff Koke
Cover by Keith Parkinson
Illustrated by Dan Smith

STEVE JACKSON GAMES

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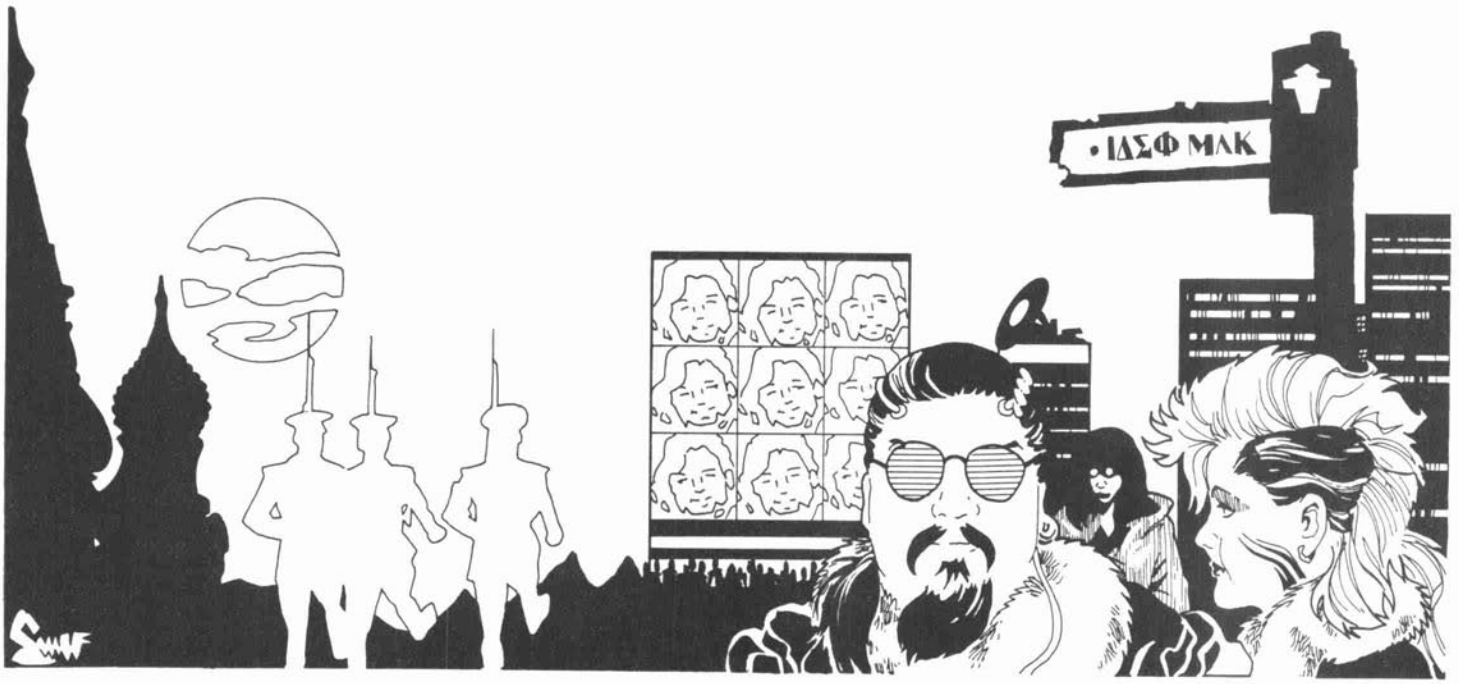

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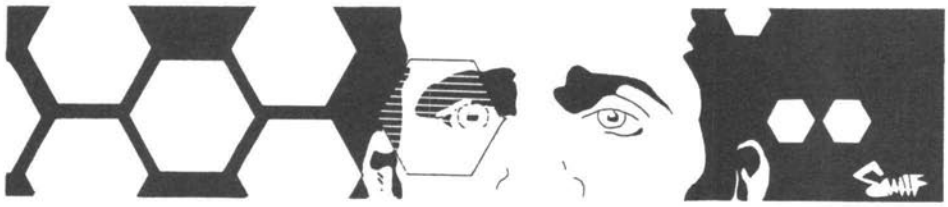
INTRODUCTION

This paryen with the steel eye was holdin' forth on how the proles get drigged by ProGov, when the nerks joined the party. No surprise. When three streetfolk talk revolutseeya, it's an easy bet two are dreamin' and the third's a sneetch for the heat.

The goons' matte-black combat suits seemed to soak up the light. Not local heat. They was carryin' burners as well as the standard-issue pocket rockets. Only the nerks get that kinda bangbang to play with. A laser took out the gent with the steely glance and I was under the benches by the time the gyrocs started flyin', and wishin' the plast was a little thicker.

I pulled my stinger and was glad to see the nerks were in monocrys, not plate. The needles made that whipcrack sound, and Gospodin Nerk by the window Gaussed out. By now, bullets and needles was flyin' everywhere, and between them and the throw weight from the nerks, the place was gettin' unhealthy. I clicked my teeth and the legs fired up, launchin' me on a flat trajectory through the glass. Two more flatblacks was posted outside the window. They was slower than me.



GURPS Cyberworld is a cyberpunk sourcebook set 50 years in the future, almost halfway through the "one-and-twenty" (21st century). Where ***GURPS Cyberpunk*** jacked the ***GURPS*** system into the virtual reality of cyberpunk fiction, ***GURPS Cyberworld*** presents a detailed setting for adventures and campaigns.

There are some differences between this book and the campaign setting described in ***GURPS Cyberpunk. GURPS Cyberpunk*** described a "mature" TL8 technology. Lasers and gyrocs were the standard sidearms. Cyberwear was chromed and slicked-down and well-behaved, and often you couldn't tell it from the original meat. In ***GURPS Cyberworld,*** the world at large – where you and I live – is at *early* TL8. There's still a lot of TL7 tech around, and TL8 toys are for the wealthy and powerful. People still shoot each other with primitive things like bullets. Most TL8 bangbang is mil-spec only. Cyberwear is not an off-the-shelf proposition you can buy on every street corner. And when you do get it, it is more likely to have raw welds and breadboard microcircuits than polished chrome and synthiskin camouflage. A hacker with a cyberdeck is one in a million, and as far as most Net computers are concerned, he's a god.

Apart from these details, there are a few other little changes from the world we know in 1993. The Provisional Government and its enforcement arm, the NERCC, maintain a police state in the U.S. The leading technological power on Earth is the economic alliance formed by Japan and the Commonwealth of Independent States (formerly the USSR). Australia is a depopulated wasteland, victim of a lab-born plague virus. The korps, the keiretsu, squeeze the world a little tighter each year – they might as well. It ain't popped yet, right?

Fun place. Nice to adventure in, not so nice if you gotta live in it. You don't like it? Kakoy' oo'zhas, paryen! That's too driggin' bad! So fix it, livewire. If you think you can . . .

About GURPS

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of the ***GURPS*** system. Our address is SJ Games, Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) any time you write us! Resources now available include:

Pyramid. This bimonthly magazine includes new rules and articles for ***GURPS***, as well as information on our other lines: ***Car Wars, Toon, Ogre Miniatures*** and more. It also covers top releases from other game companies – ***Traveller, Call of Cthulhu, Shadowrun***, etc.

New supplements and adventures. We're always working on new material, and we'll be happy to let you know what's available. A current catalog is available for an SASE.

Errata. Everyone makes mistakes, including us – but we do our best to fix our errors. Up-to-date errata sheets for all ***GURPS*** releases, including this book, are always available from SJ Games; be sure to include an SASE with your request.

Q&A. We do our best to answer any game question accompanied by an SASE.

Gamer input. We value your comments. We will consider them, not only for new products, but also when we update this book in later printings!

BBS. For those who have home computers, SJ Games operates a multi-line BBS with discussion areas for several games, including ***GURPS***. Much of the playtest feedback for new products comes from the BBS. It's up 24 hours per day at 512-447-4449, at 300, 1200 or 2400 baud. Give us a call! We also have discussion areas on Compuserve, GEnie, and America Online.

Page References

References to the ***GURPS Basic Set,*** Third Edition begin with a B – e.g., p. B102 means p. 102 of the ***Basic Set,*** Third Edition. HT means ***GURPS High-Tech,*** a UT refers to ***GURPS Ultra-Tech,*** and a C refers to ***GURPS Cyberpunk***.

About the Author

Paul Hume is a freelance author who lives and works in Wheaton, Maryland.

GURPS Cyberworld is his first project for Steve Jackson games, but he has written and co-written innumerable books for FASA and others, including ***Shadowrun,*** *Second Edition,* ***Grimoire*** and ***Shadowbeat.***

1 A WORLD ON THE EDGE

In a dark corner of the New York megasprawl, an appliance store faces the street, its vidscreens and thriddie boxes showing snow through the plastiglass storefront. Nobody is on the street this early, except for a stray dog, so the flickering screens play to an audience of one.

As if on cue, all the screens change to display a korp logo over a computer-generated Earth spinning in slow motion. The Earth fades to a vector-graphic globe with continental outlines, then a slow dissolve to Bink and Bett sitting behind a light blue-gray desk, with the worldscreen behind them.

Bink flashes the camera a knowing smile. "'Hayo gozaimas, paryeni. I'm Bink Bentley."

"And I'm Bett Bartley."

"And here's SatNews, Jan-one-forty-three. Population worldwide partied down last night, making much welcome to 2043."

Behind the cheerful twosome, the worldscreen displays laserflash shows and holo-pyrotechnics over Hermitage in Petrograd, Kremlin in Moskva, Commonwealth Congress Building in Minsk, all capitals of the various Republics. During the montage, the screen expands to take up the whole picture.

Bett's voice creeps in over the video. "In the Commonwealth, folks made bolshoyeh praz'navoon'yeh, closing the year of celebrations marking the Big Five-Oh . . ."

The video spits out a scratchy oldvid of USSR flag being lowered for the last time on January 1st, 1992.

". . . half a century since the old Soyuz went dodo, back at the threshold of the one-and-twenty. The celebration also marked the 20th anniversary of the Joint Economic Agreement that started the Russo-Japanese Economic Union. Russky-Pres Malashev . . ."

The worldscreen brings up a much more recent shot – Russian President Andrei Malashev and Japanese Premiere Tadeo Takahashi, drinking toasts; behind them, a huge window looks out on the Earth, hanging against a backdrop of stars.

". . . and Prime Minister Takahashi, celebrating the occasion at TenTan's main orbital facility, wished the crowds in Yeltsin Square and elsewhere 'Snoh'veem Goh'dum!' via hololink."

The shot pulls back from the worldscreen, showing Bink and Bett, with their permanent smiles.

"And 'Happy New Year' back at 'em, Bett. In the U.S., ProPrexy Hammond and ProCon leaders holo-hosted the traditional Times Square blowout, and indicated that the National Recovery Plan for the past year had come in far above predictions."

Once again, the worldscreen spins around and grows to cover the entire view. Now it shows Provisional President Hammond addressing a bustling crowd in Times Square. Hammond's voice, a powerful grandfatherly lilt, comes echoing over loudspeakers.

". . . and in the light of these advances, made by the dedication and sacrifice of the American people, I feel confident in predicting that the state of emergency will end much sooner than expected, allowing the Provisional Government to step down and, God willing, institute free elections in the very near future . . ."

The scene dissolves back to Bink, head and shoulders only. The korp logo fills up the worldscreen behind him.

"A holocopy of President Hammond's full New Year's address is available on any SatNews d/l node for a nominal charge. And while you're there, paryeni, don't forget to browse all our hot SatNews libefiles – all the news, all the time, on SatNews.

"Elsewhere, less fun-making for the New Year. A joint NERCC/FBI operation ended last night in a krovvy-red shootout at the state line between Arizona and Sonora, where a coyote operation had been ferrying unauthorized Scale Three citizens from the Low Six to the Upper Forty-Eight."

Without losing Bink's upbeat discourse, the camera pulls back to take in combat footage on the screen behind him – a chopper strike on a convoy of half a dozen ramshackle trucks. The footage is intercut with starlite- and IR-enhanced helmet-cam footage of ground fighting and mop-up. The scene is eeirily macabre with only Bink's warm voice for a soundtrack.

Talkin' One-and-Twenty

Babooshka: (Russ.) Grandmother. Granny. Old-fashioned.
Bolshoyeh: (Russ.) Big. Great. Large.
Coyote: Someone who smuggles illegal transients from Mexico to the U.S.
Dyadooshka: (Russ.) Grandfather. Gramps. Old-fashioned.
Go dodo: To become extinct or obsolete.
'Hayo gozaimas: (Jap.) Hello.
Khorosho: (Russ.) Good. OK. Fine.
Korp: Multinational corporation. A keiretsu.
Krovvy: (Russ.) Bloody.
Livewire: Informal term of address.
One-and-twenty: The 21st century. Up-to-date. Modern.
Paryen: (Russ.) Pal. Friend. Chum. (pl. paryeni)
Praz'navoon'yeh: (Russ.) Celebration. Party.
Snoh'veem Goh'dum: (Russ.) Happy New Year.
TD: Tolliver's Disease.
Toller: Tolliver's Disease.
Touchdown: Tolliver's Disease.

Firstworld/Lastworld

People used to talk about "First World" nations (industrially developed), "Third World" nations (a.k.a. "emerging" nations, ones with no industrial infrastructure to speak of), and so on.

On the Edge, it boils down to firstworld and lastworld. Anyone in the middle tends to slug their way into the former or get sucked down into the latter.

The firstworld includes the United States, United Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Central Asian Federation, the Israeli Empire, Japan, most of the republics, free provinces in Canada, and Chilentina. Maybe the Third Revolution's China is at firstworld levels, too, if anyone knew just what was going on in there.

The lastworld is almost everywhere else. Some lastworld nations are tough, with a decent level of tech available, but it's all imported. They shovel out resources and they get tech-toys back. Most of them are in the same bind the Third World was in last century, with a few big boys at the top raking off most of the loot, and the streetfolk, the villagers, the farmers living off the crumbs.

"The commissioners for the Southwestern and Mexican regions issued a joint statement that all due care has been taken to respect the reserved rights of the Mex C-3s involved. Over half the coyote's cubs came out without a scratch. Khorosho job, fellas."

The camera cuts to Bett. "On the Cuban front, General Ormiston's weekly press briefing denied the rumors that U.S. overflights of the Camaguay region had encountered SmartSAM batteries. The general noted that Operation Cuba Libre timetables have been adjus–"

The screen goes black for a second, then flashes in bright red letters "[CLASSIFIED CLASSIFIED CLASSIFIED]." After 30 seconds, the image of Bett reemerges on the screen ". . . penalties for unauthorized media activity in a designated combat area."

Back to a double shot of Bink and Bett. Bink speaks.

"And in the Antarctic, a missile barrage hit the Korsakov-Shimadzu Korp's Resource Probe base camp, spilling blood under the midnight sun. The 'Spear of Gaia' ecoterrs claimed responsibility for the raid, which dusted twelve korpers and dropped twice as many into the doctanks. The ecoterr hit burned a cool million rubyen worth of hot korp tech as well. In a press conference, K-S spokesmen reported that the base camp would soon be back in operation, with all functions khorosho within 24 hours. Sound efficient? You bet. That's just one example of the kind of performance you can expect from Korsakov-Shimadzu. We'll be back after this message, which shows you a few others."

Trendy, upbeat music slides in from the background, and the screens fade to the SatNews logo. Then the scenes cut to a Korsakov-Shimadzu advertisement.

In the deserted alley, with the first sounds of a sleepy populace waking the city in the background, the stray dog wanders off toward dawn to find some food.

Looking Backways Twentywards

Fifty years from now the world is on the Edge. The edge of what? Of heaven or hell? Of an explosion of technology and information, or just an explosion?

From 2043, looking back to 1993, here's a quick rundown of the events that pretty much destroyed the forms and norms that Dyadooshka and Babooshka used to know, and left us on the Edge.

1990-2000: Slipping into Chaos

The Commonwealth of Independent States

The Soviet Union was formally dissolved on January 1, 1992 and its member republics formed the Commonwealth of Independent States. In its early years, the CIS faced economic collapse, shortages in agriculture and industry, violent ethnic wars, and the coup attempts of 1991, 1993, 1995 and 1996. More than once, the Commonwealth almost fell apart in a welter of suspicion and old hatreds.

Russia remained the strongest voice in Commonwealth affairs, despite some early attempts to avoid Slavic, and specifically Russian dominance in the CIS. The Slavic republics gave up trying to please the other member states. The death of Yeltsin, from an anonymous sniper's bullet during the National Front's uprising of '96, was the pivotal point. His successor, Dmitri Breslov, made it clear that while Russia was prepared to cooperate with the Commonwealth, it would no longer subordinate its own national concerns merely to calm the fears of the other republics. Russian economic and military intervention on behalf of ethnic Russians in other republics became a continuous and escalating cause of tension in the CIS throughout the rest of the decade.

The TD Pandemic

Tolliver's Disease, a highly contagious retroviral plague, broke out in 1997. Modern transportation let TD move like lightning across the world scene. As epidemiology identified the pattern, international travel and even travel from one city to another shrank to a trickle. Most countries slapped ferocious quarantine restrictions on travelers. In some regions, panicked residents indulged in do-it-yourself "public health measures" that left thousands dead or wounded.

Cities became polarized between two major categories. The "have-lots," those who did not flee to the less dangerous suburbs and exurbs, could afford privately-enforced security, medical ID checkpoints, protected public transport and other measures. Corporate and government employees could either commute between the hellish cities and the relative heaven of exurbia, or live in high-security "endominiums" – self-contained complexes of apartments, shops, offices and other facilities that kept the plague-stricken world safely locked o-u-t. The "have-nots" could afford neither flight from the city nor security within it. They carried on as best they could. As jobs moved out of the cities in ever-increasing numbers, or became restricted to those who could satisfy the high standards set by the korp enclaves, social services broke down under the increased demands of the urban poor.

The Toller was joined by diseases of poverty in many firstworld cities: cholera, typhus, kwashiorkor, beriberi.

Justin Tolliver identified the virus responsible for the disease in 1999. An effective treatment was developed in 2008, but it was, and is, expensive, and only the most having of the have-lots could afford it. A vaccine was developed in 2019 but did not go into global distribution until 2021.

Self-preservation dictated that the wealthy nations and corporations provide vaccination at little or no cost to poorer populations. Rumors abound that adulterated vaccine or outright placebos went to some areas.

Tolliver's Disease

Tolliver's Disease (TD, touchdown, the Toller) is a retroviral infection which affects primates, including *Homo sapiens*. It can be spread by aerosol droplet infection (sneezing, coughing), by intimate contact or, in the later stages, by contact with the discharge from a victim's lesions.

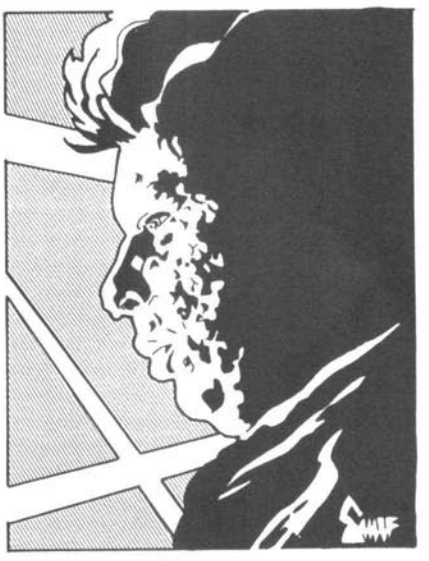
Anyone with the Immunity to Disease advantage is immune to TD, as is anyone who has been vaccinated against it. Most PCs will receive this vaccination along with the usual round of childhood immunizations (polio, DPT, measles, HIV). People from a lastworld country, or those with a negative Status might not be immunized. Anyone who has survived TD is also immune.

Susceptible individuals can contract it when they are exposed to a carrier, or are in an area where TD has broken out (see p. B133).

An infected person displays no symptoms for 2d days; during this period there is no test that can accurately diagnose the disease.

After this time is up, the victim is infectious and anyone exposed to him may catch the disease. The carrier still displays no symptoms, but standard medical tests will easily reveal the presence of Tolliver's virus. Tests require lab facilities of TL7 or better, and a successful roll vs. Diagnosis+4. This phase lasts the carrier's HT+1d days.

Continued on next page . . .



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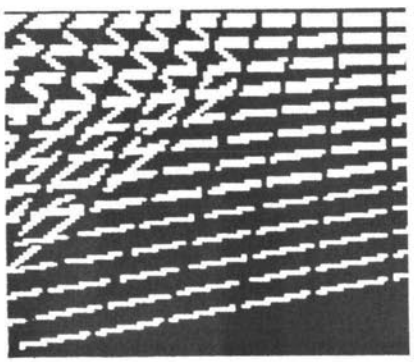

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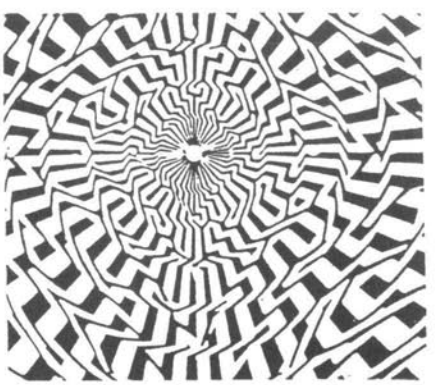

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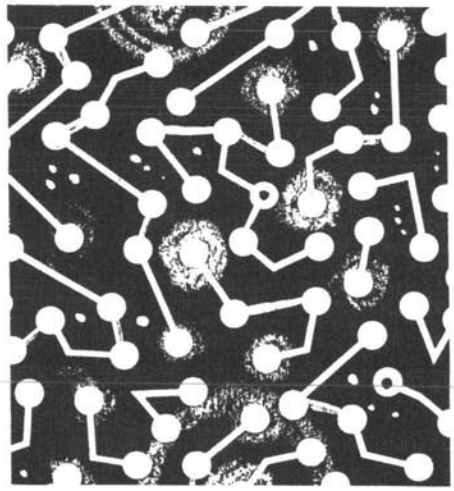

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