

GURPS

Fourth Edition

TRANSHUMAN SPACE

PERSONNEL FILES 3TM WILD JUSTICETM



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Revenge is a kind of wild justice.

– Francis Bacon, “Of Revenge,” *Essays*

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INTRODUCTION

Each supplement in *Transhuman Space: Personnel Files* line describes a campaign set in the world of Transhuman Space, complete with background, brief scenario suggestions, and notes for the GM. The material also provides a set of characters suitable to act as PCs in this same campaign. The characters are detailed using *GURPS Fourth Edition*, with templates and other details drawn from *Transhuman Space: Changing Times* (and *Transhuman Space: Shell-Tech* in a few cases), which are also available from e23. *Personnel Files 3: Wild Justice* relates the tale of four unusual companions on a quest for revenge.

It's sometimes said that *Transhuman Space* describes a wonderfully detailed world, but it's hard to decide on and define an actual campaign to run there. The *Personnel Files* line is intended to provide an answer to this, and to demonstrate what PCs for the setting might look like. These characters can also be used as NPCs, as antagonists, allies, patrons, or background color.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Phil Masters is the author of *Transhuman Space: Changing Times*, *Transhuman Space: Shell-Tech*, *Transhuman Space: Personnel Files*, and a chapter in *Transhuman Space: High Frontier*. He has also worked on countless other *GURPS* products, such as *Places of Mystery*, *All-Star Jam 2004*, and *Powers*, and on products for other companies. He lives in the U.K., and he doesn't have a dog.

The law is not the private property of lawyers, nor is justice the exclusive province of judges and juries. In the final analysis, true justice is not a matter of courts and law books, but of a commitment in each of us to liberty and mutual respect.

– Jimmy Carter



WILD JUSTICE

The characters detailed in this supplement form a tightly knit group with a specific objective. Having been thrown together by a mysterious incident that involved the murder of someone they all regarded as a friend, mentor, or leader, they

now seek answers and justice – or just revenge. This goal looks set to take a while. They also happen to be a rather strange and diverse group of characters, especially by the standards of the campaign's rather backwoods setting.

THE BEGINNING

The starting point for this campaign is a farming village in a remote area of the impoverished African nation of Tanganyika (see *Fifth Wave*, p. 50). A few years ago, the village was surprised and pleased to learn that they would have a new neighbor, as someone bought a tract of open land and had a big new house built there. The newcomer turned out to be a citizen of South Africa, named Anton Hollick, who lived entirely alone apart from a few AIs. The villagers were bemused at the thought of someone wanting that big a house all to himself, although they had enough idea about infomorphs and the Web to see that “alone” might not mean quite the same thing to a Fifth Waver like Hollick. They also learned that part of the house was given over to some kind of laboratory or workshop. It seemed that he was some kind of researcher or development engineer. Still, Hollick seemed friendly enough, and he brought some much-appreciated business to the area. He even hired some help from the village for good pay.

In fact, after a few months, he took on a permanent employee. It seemed that he wanted a gatekeeper – nothing very serious, just someone to watch the entrance to the estate, greet guests with a human face, and occasionally check the fence for damage or round up animals that had got into the grounds. After consulting some villagers who he'd come to trust, Hollick hired a young man named Joseph Kuzenza, even paying for a little training in the equipment he'd be using. This may just have been a gesture to keep the villagers happy with his presence while mostly preserving his privacy, but Hollick became quite friendly with Kuzenza, chatting with him and showing him his current project. This was an uplifted canine named Rolphie, who Hollick was training with the aid of an implanted specialist full-sapient AI. The theory was that the team of dog and infomorph could learn to work together as one, and the education process would enhance the postcanine's relatively limited intellect. The results, Hollick said, seemed promising.

In less guarded moments, Hollick also let slip a few other things to Kuzenza, though not much. He mentioned enemies – people from whom he wanted to get away, which explained his move to this remote area. He didn't say much, but he didn't seem too worried. Apparently, however serious the problem may once have been, he felt that he'd put it behind him.

Evidently, he was wrong. One evening, as Joe Kuzenza settled down on his bed in the estate gatehouse, a salvo of seeker

missiles came skimming in from the wilderness. Most of them were assigned to demolish the main house, and especially the living quarters, with methodical, pinpoint strikes. Almost as an afterthought, it seemed, two slammed into the gatehouse, bringing that down too.

A group of villagers arrived within minutes, and they dug Joe Kuzenza out of the rubble. By sheer good fortune, his injuries weren't life-threatening, and he was even able to help with the efforts at the main house. Not that anyone could help with what mattered: The attackers had no doubt performed adequate reconnaissance, and there was just about enough of Anton Hollick's body left to permit easy DNA verification. However, Joe led the others to where Rolphie was lying injured in the remains of the research wing, and they discovered that the dog too was only slightly hurt. Then something made Joe pause; it seemed that he was listening to the fancy wearable system that Mr. Hollick had issued him. He found an intact computer near where Rolphie had been located, rebooted it on emergency battery power, and connected his wearable up for a few minutes. Then he sat down and wept for a while.

He was composed by the time that the police team arrived from the nearest town, and he answered their questions with seeming honesty. They didn't appear to notice that he no longer had his wearable, or much other equipment on him, and Rolphie was nowhere to be seen either. They took statements, announced that the perpetrators of this terrible crime would be found and punished soon, and then left.

Few of the villagers were surprised by the police behavior. Joe Kuzenza certainly wasn't. In a desperately poor country, still not fully recovered from decades of civil war, it's all too easy for very rich foreigners to buy the compliance of a few well-placed officials. Anyone could see that this attack had been very carefully organized and financed beyond the dreams of any ordinary citizen of Tanganyika. The strangest thing, it seemed to many, was the way that Joe Kuzenza seemed to be getting angry over it. Nonetheless, he was entitled to be annoyed, having been hurt himself, and he was a neighbor or a cousin, so he received some help. Fortunately, the cops had evidently only been bribed to be sloppy, and not to dig deep on behalf of whomever was paying. In fact, it seemed to many that Joe had come out of this pretty well – he'd acquired the wearable computer, the talking dog, a gun, and some body armor.

He said he was going to take a few jobs around the neighborhood, and this gear, better than anything in the village, meant that he could ask for quite useful pay.

Joe was actually working toward a larger goal. Anton Hollick's voice was now talking in his ear, some of the time. Although he knew that this wasn't really Anton, it reinforced his determination to resolve what had happened to his old boss and sort-of friend. Rolphie agreed, as did Rolphie's trainer (with reservations). The team of four is now on a mission. They take paying jobs, using a little high-tech gear and computer resources to accomplish goals that are hard or impossible for most people in rural Tanganyika, but this is strictly a means to an end for them. More importantly, they're

making contacts and acquiring skills and resources. They periodically return to Joe's home village to pick up messages and follow up specific clues, but the paying work is taking them increasingly far afield these days – though still within this region of Tanganyika for now. The job-hunting has to be managed carefully, too, as the desire to get good money and build a professional reputation of sorts has to be balanced against the need to avoid attracting official attention. Ideal assignments give them some chance to follow up clues or hints about the people who killed Hollick. They're not quite sure what they're going to do when they discover exactly what happened that terrible night, but they're certainly determined to find the truth.

Group Equipment and Wealth

Only one of the characters detailed here commands any sort of wealth or resources. That's Joe – and he's not exactly rich by general *Transhuman Space* standards. The others are legally treated as property in their homeland, and Joe has to look after them. Fortunately, their needs are generally few; Rolphie can often feed himself, without money, if necessary, and the AIs don't require ordinary food or drink. Nonetheless, the group must perforce live something of a hand-to-mouth existence, and a pressing demand for resources should drive many scenarios and decisions in this campaign. Even AIs are theoretically supposed to pay a cost of living in *Transhuman Space* games. While these cybershells can't actually starve and don't have to pay rent on processors or data storage, the GM should throw in the occasional requirement for maintenance or replacement power cells to remind the group of their situation.

The economic context for all this is Tanganyika, which is listed in *Fifth Wave* as a *Dead Broke* area. The notes on *Wealth, Status, and Cost of Living* on pp. 36-37 of *Changing Times* only go down as far as Poor, which is how this

region should be treated for these purposes. In truth, no substantial population could survive if the prevailing typical wealth level was *literally* Dead Broke, as anyone in that condition can only live by scavenging or the charity of others, and in such a region, there just wouldn't be enough resources to go around.

Using those abstracted rules, Joe Kuzenza, as a Struggling character, can usually find jobs that pay around \$1,300 for a 30-hour week. He's Status 0 (working as a personal servant/guard for a rich foreigner looked very respectable to his neighbors), so his cost of living is \$600 a month. He takes freelance work, so he can sustain his position in any period when he works an average of 15 hours each week. By taking longer assignments, as he usually does when he gets the chance, he can provide the AIs and Rolphie with generally adequate support. Alternatively or additionally, the others could be considered to get "jobs" as aides to Joe – but doing this too obviously, interacting directly with other people and making their abilities obvious, puts their dangerous Secrets at risk.

RUNNING THE CAMPAIGN

The structure of this campaign should somewhat resemble a television series – specifically, a low-rent, high-tech *The Fugitive* meets *The A-Team*. Every "episode" (which will probably take one or a few game sessions), the PCs deal with some problem, sometimes drawing closer to the resolution of their main objective. Sometimes a completely independent problem or the simple need to make a living and fund the search side-tracks them. Occasionally, they discover a whole new layer of complexity to the mystery. As with such a TV series, the whole thing revolves around the design of the core characters.

This *isn't* a combat-oriented campaign concept, however, as the provided characters illustrate. Joe and Rolphie are competent enough in a brawl in their way, but there are only two of them, and well-armed opponents are likely to bring them down in short order. Rather, plots should revolve around investigation and observation, with the two organic team members supplying legwork and a human perspective on events, and the

two AIs providing the really crucial advantages – computer capabilities way beyond the norm for rural Tanganyika. Among other things, their ability to run skill-set software makes them immensely flexible. They also can gain useful access to the resources of the global Web, although they do have to be in range of a functioning radio node (or plugged into a cable connection) for this to work properly, and at times, their access may be frustratingly slow.

THE TEAM

When starting a campaign like this, the GM has to be sure that the PCs will fit. Anyone looking to run this specific campaign doesn't *have* to use exactly these four characters, but they'll need heroes who make sense in the background and the specific location, and who'll be highly motivated to pursue the core objective of the campaign.

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